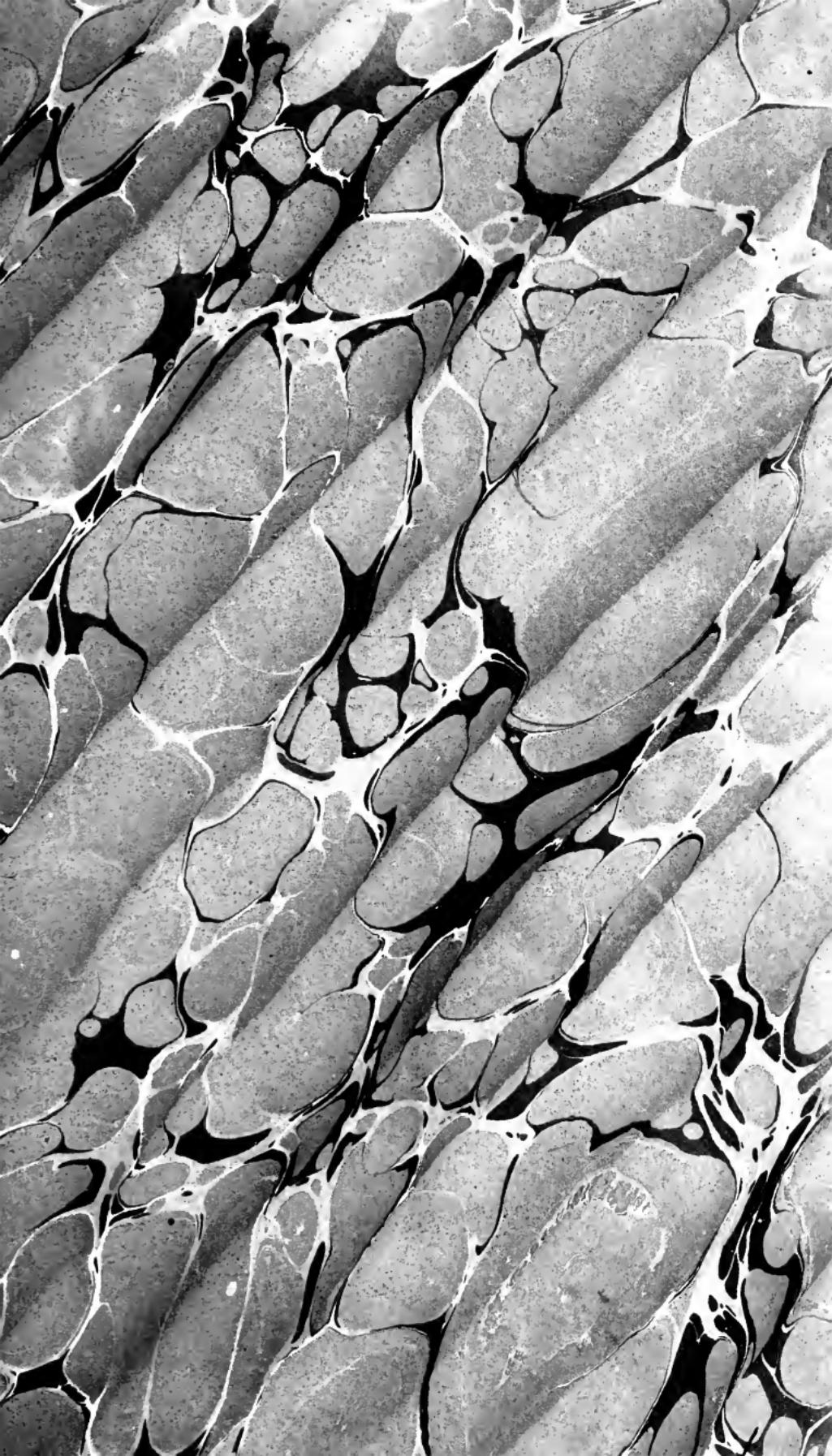




William Ferrand.









HIGH LIFE,

A NOVEL.

" 'Tis from HIGH LIFE high characters are drawn."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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HIGH LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

“ Here woman reigns, the mother, daughter, wife,
Strews with fresh flowers the narrow path of life ;
Around her knees domestic duties meet,
And fireside pleasures gambol at her feet.”

“ **W**HAT a beautiful evening this is !” said the Countess of Malverton ; as she let fall the crimson curtain she had held aside for the last few minutes to look out.

“ **Y**es,” replied her mother, an old lady engaged in working at a table, “ I was ad-

miring the appearance of the corridor above stairs, (as I passed through it just now,) where the moonlight is shining in full radiance on the old pictures.

“ I think it is probable,” observed Lady Malverton, “ that either Mr. Winters or his son will walk over to tea this evening. It is an age since we have seen the former, and the latter may have returned from London, and brought me the packet I expect from my Lord.”

“ Did you request him to call at the office?” asked her mother.

“ No, but his father was good enough to say he would mention it when writing to him.”

“ It would be an agreeable surprize to find the parcel dated from the Cape,” observed Mrs. Vigers.

“ Too agreeable to be probable,” replied the Countess; “ indeed, I am sure my lord could

not leave India at present, unless he chose to resign his governorship : a thing it would not be prudent to do. I only fear," added her ladyship, " he will be for having me and the girls over, and that, much as I wish to be again with him, would not be at all pleasing to me."

" You surely would not run such a risk," said Mrs. Vigers, " as to take out Georgiana, after the physicians gave you their opinion so strongly on the impropriety of such a measure ; even if you and Alicia were obliged to go ?"

" Ah ! my dear mother, the question is how could I leave her ?" replied Lady Malverton, looking fondly at her daughter, a beautiful girl, apparently about seventeen, who was playing on the piano ; " and it is, you know, nearly two years since I consulted them. She was then just recovering from illness, and consequently extremely delicate. I should not have thought of asking an opinion on the subject,

had not the Earl so wished me to accompany him out to India ; and to have gone and left her in that state would have been impossible."

" Georgiana certainly looks healthier than she did when she came from London," observed Mrs. Vigers, " though she will never, I fear, be very strong."

" Her looking better is easily accounted for," said the Countess ; " here she has the advantage of bathing, regular hours, and exercise, whereas, both in town and at Granville Castle, from the immensity of company my lord's public situation obliged us to keep, regularity and early hours were things quite out of the question: and young as she was, circumstances combined to make Georgiana participate in these disadvantages. My brother-in-law was so doatingly fond of her, he always insisted on her being allowed to dine at the hour we did, frequently keeping her up to supper, taking her to a play or concert ; or anywhere in short that

she could be brought. Her father made just as much of her, and his mother often prevailed on me to let her go to places, and pay visits, which, though I foolishly consented, I knew were improper for her. But you have often heard me describe our London life, and I am sure I never look at Georgiana, but to reproach myself for not having accepted your kind offer, and sent her and her sister down here at that time."

" Well, Alicia, do not have reason to reproach yourself again, by taking them out to India; but leave them with me, and I promise that both Alicia and Georgiana shall be as well taken care of as if you were here."

" I thank you, my dear mother, and I have not the least doubt of it: but I will not anticipate what would be to me the greatest of misfortunes—going to India and being separated from my children—by making any promise."

" I hope, indeed," said Mrs. Vigers, " that

you will not be called on to make such a sacrifice, and that my offer may be a resource, to which you will never have necessity to resort. But what is Sophy reading so intently?" inquired the old lady, to change a topic which she perceived almost overcame her daughter, "Is it a novel?"

"No, indeed, Ma'am," returned Miss Darcliff, looking up with a smile.

"I believe Georgiana is the young lady for novels," said the Countess.

"I assure you, you are mistaken, Mamma," returned her daughter, rising from the piano; "I never read them when I have anything else to do."

"Let me see," said Mrs. Vigers, "though it is a long time since I read anything of the kind, whether I could not pretty well describe the commencement of a romance:—'On a gloomy evening in the month of November—(is not that the month, Georgiana?)—when the wind

whistled through the long, unfrequented galleries, and shook the ancient tapestry of Castle —— Gonsalvo ; while the trees swung their branches in terrific sounds, and the old casements rattled as if they were about to crack ; lights were seen flitting in the northern wing of the Castle by an old porter who was shutting the last postern. He gives the alarm to the inmates, magnifying it to having seen figures in white, or black, whichever gives the most terrific idea, through the narrow windows of the castle, brandishing them, and beckoning towards them. Horror fills them all, for this gallery of course has the reputation of being haunted, and the doors leading to it cannot, in a *passable romance*, have been opened for less than fifty or sixty years. However, they determine to gather courage and reconnoitre it. Then a housekeeper, who has nearly completed her century, waddles forth with a ponderous bunch of keys at her side ; and after much searching,

produces one of the gallery, which with trembling hands she delivers to some stern Manfred—”

“ Oh, no!” said the Countess of Malverton; “ it is, I think, generally to the beautiful heroine. She with intrepid spirit leads the way. An *irresistible* Matilda, an *heavenly* Angelina, or *divine* Julia.”

“ I believe it is,” replied Mrs. Vigers:—“ and in these supposed haunted apartments is usually discovered an immured parent, doomed by a tyrannical husband (or disappointed suitor) to retribute in eternal solitude crimes never perpetrated; and fed with bread and water, supplied by mysterious mechanism.”

“ Oh, Grandmamma,” cried Lady Georgiana, “ how can you, who have so long renounced romance-reading, remember so well of what it consists ? ”

“ I have not forgot what it is to be young, and fond of romances too,” said the old lady;

“ though many, many years have elapsed since that period. I even recollect, Georgiana, thinking when I was a girl, that I would write something of the kind; and that my heroine, for variety, should be plain in her person: or, if she were handsome, have some qualities that would counterbalance her external advantages. For their being beautiful as goddesses and virtuous as angels, is so hackneyed, that a young person versed in this sort of reading, and without much opportunity of seeing the world, would be inclined, with many other silly notions, to believe that beauty must always be the accompaniment of amiability, and that a want of the one implied a deficiency of the other. If such a young person happens to be acquainted with some plain yet amiable people, it may make her for a moment suspect the fallacy of what almost every novel and romance has tended to confirm; but the next, she persuades herself they can only have been so in appear-

ance, and that real virtue must be always ‘by the Graces dressed.’”

“And you, Madam,” said the Countess, “were determined if you wrote, not to add to the number of those deluded girls; and indeed you were right. I wish all novelists would concur in not misleading their readers while they entertain them. That there are writers who, while they delight and fascinate, neither pervert the imagination nor the heart, the many admirable works of a lighter kind which enrich our collection bear testimony.”

“There] certainly are,” observed Mrs. Viegers; “and though I spoke in somewhat of a general way, I by no means intended an indefinite philippic against these sort of books; for I think there are some extremely well-written, and that when they are so, they are very agreeable relaxations. I would only condemn those which inculcate ideas of the supremacy and necessity for hap-

piness—of beauty, rank, fortune, or any such adventitious and transitory blessings ; considering, as I do, that instilling ideas of the kind, is only calculated to excite discontent in those to whom such blessings are unattainable, and pride in the possessors of them. As for *beauty*, I think its incapability of adding a shade of merit to its possessor, can never be too strongly impressed on the mind, though flattery and folly too frequently refute the axiom. It ought to be considered, as of all gifts of Heaven the one most independent of ourselves, for which we deserve the least commendation, and that to be vain of it, betrays the greatest want of something better. Now, right tempers and dispositions deserve great credit ; for it generally rests with ourselves, either to train and direct our inclinations to what is right, or pervert and mislead them."

" But, with respect to beauty," said the Countess, " I am sure you will allow that

when it appears but a *secondary* endowment, an emblem of still more lovely dispositions, it is an advantage—a very great one."

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Vigers; "I do not argue against its agreeability, *only* against the possession of it being considered a merit, (of which we have reason to be proud,) or a charm which is to suffice the necessity of better qualifications. To be pleasing," added Mrs. Vigers, "I think more than desirable, (absolutely necessary,) if we would wish to set off intrinsic worth: for, as Miss Smyth says, 'To be good and disagreeable, is high-treason against virtue.'"

"I think," observed the Countess, looking at her watch, "I may as well employ myself a little; I have been in a most dreadful state of idleness since dinner. But I believe there are times," added her Ladyship, as she crossed the room, "when one feels inclined to do nothing but think, or perhaps talk."

“ Whether those times should be denominated idle, entirely depends, Alicia, on whether the thinking or talking is to some or no purpose. *Your* time is always employed usefully, whichever way your powers are exerted.”

“ I thank you,” replied the complimented lady; “ it is well to have some one to reconcile me to myself. My conscience tells a very different tale.”

“ What does Lady Malverton’s conscience accuse her of?” asked an old gentleman, who just then entered the room.

“ Mr. Winters, by all that’s wonderful!” exclaimed the Countess of Malverton, assuming a theatrical voice and manner. “ Why, my dear Sir, what became of you this week past, that we saw nothing of you, when we are generally in the habit of meeting every day?”

“ I leave you to guess, my Lady,” returned he.

“ Oh, it is a thing quite out of my power!”

returned the animated Countess ; “ perhaps you made an attempt to join the Northern expedition, but found yourself too much behind, and returned.”

“ Thirty years ago you might have suspected such a thing of me, had you known me,” said he, smiling ; “ but now I enter on no such hazardous undertakings. I am much too sedate for your Ladyship’s guess to be true. Well, Mrs. Vigers, what has induced me to play truant ?” continued he.

“ I am the worst guesser in the world,” replied she ; “ but I am sure, wherever you were, you were acceptable, and doing good.”

Mr. Winters bowed. “ What says your fair neighbour ? Can you guess where I have been, Miss Darcliff ?”

“ Perhaps attending a friend, or performing *his* duties.”

“ Miss Darcliff also gives me credit for be-

ing well employed ; I hope I shall not greatly fall in the estimation of either lady. Well, Lady Georgiana ! you are looking so intelligent I imagine you know."

"I assure you," returned her Ladyship, "my suppositions are much the same ; unless, indeed, you wished to make us feel your absence, Mr. Winters, and stayed away on purpose."

"Lady Georgiana smiles so archly," said he, "that I am convinced she guesses something more than she says."

"Then, to tell you the truth, Sir, I suppose you to have been marrying."

"You have guessed right, my Lady, I was indeed marrying."

"Marrying ! Ah, Mr. Winters, you cannot deceive me there," said the Countess ; "you were marrying some one else."

"Yes, Madam, one does not usually marry oneself."

“ Why, you are quite impenetrable,” said her Ladyship; “ won’t you lay aside enigma and tell us in plain English whom you performed the ceremony for; though I suspect,” added she.

“ Oh, the wedding comes last in the story, according to custom.”

“ We must not anticipate then, I suppose,” observed Miss Darcliff, “ but hear it in its proper place.”

“ Well, if you are content to do that, I will commence the account of my proceedings. On the very night my son left me (who, by the bye, is not returned) I was summoned to administer spiritual comfort to a friend of mine who was thought to be dying, (but who is now, thank God! quite recovered,) and after staying with him a few days at his request, and enjoying the pleasure of seeing him gradually amend, I went on a visit to our old friends the Mandevilles; who have been (as I suppose you know) about a fortnight in the country.

Indeed, I heard them say you had called twice, and how much they regretted not having been at home."

"It happened very unfortunately on both sides," said Lady Malverton; "the day we went there some of them were really out, and others denied, as they afterwards wrote to mention, from not being aware, till too late, that it was friends so intimate as ourselves who called. The day they returned the visit, my mother and the girls were out driving, and I was gone to bathe. We called there the other morning but none of them were at home. Some indeed gone, as it afterwards turned out, to pay a visit here, but by a different road: so we missed them. Consequently, by a chapter of accidents, we have seen none of the family, none of the female part I mean to say. Sir William and the young men have rode over several times. But I beg pardon, Mr. Winters, for interrupting you. Now for the marriage."

“ Well,” said Mr. Winters, “ you shall have it in newspaper style. Married, by special license, on Friday last, at Hermitage, in Surrey, the seat of Sir William Mandeville, Bart. Charles Damer, Esq. nephew of the Baronet, and cousin to the Earl of Dorchester, to Caroline Falkner, third daughter of Lucias Falkner, Esq. of Ivy Grove, county of Kent.”

“ Well,” said Lady Malverton, laughing; “ we understood that much by the paper.”

“ The match,” continued Mr. Winters, “ had been deferred on account of Sir William’s absence from England; and therefore they made a point to lose no time on his return.”

“ But what was the necessity of his uncle’s being in the country?” inquired Lady Malverton; “ did he wish to have his opinion of the lady?”

“ Perhaps,” said Mr. Winters, “ he might wish to pay his uncle that compliment, whe-

ther he intended to be influenced by his opinion or not. He might also prefer having his nuptials celebrated at Hermitage."

"I almost wonder the Mandevilles did not make a more dashing business of this wedding, they are so fond of every thing in the way of gaiety and show," observed Lady Malverton.

"Why, I am inclined to suspect," said Mr. Winters, "that they did not wish to give publicity to what was very far from a satisfactory event. The young lady was destitute of all those advantages which are passports to favour at Hermitage—family, rank, and fortune."

"Amiability and beauty then, I suppose," said Lady Georgiana, "were the passports to her lover's heart."

"From all I have seen of her," returned Mr. Winters, "I give her credit for possessing the *former* in a great degree, and of the latter she has no inconsiderable share."

“ Is there much company stopping at the Castle ? ” inquired Lady Malverton.

“ Indeed there is,” said Mr. Winters ; “ Sir William is as hospitable as ever, and Lady Mandeville as fond of society : but most of the people stopping at the Hermitage at present, consist of those whose votes the Baronet is interested in gaining for his friend Lord Clavers (the son of the Earl of Camelford), who has, you doubtless know, set up for the county against Sir Henry Ramsay, of Ramsay Park.”

“ I believe Lord Clavers would be on the Ministerial side,” observed Mrs. Vigers ; “ therefore he has my good wishes, as far as they can serve him. Sir Henry is quite an oppositionist, a man of the people, I know.”

“ Besides those concerned in the election, they have stopping at the Hermitage, the Earl of Rosmollen, the Honourable Mr. Delamere, Colonel Blomberg, Lord Yalbroke, and a foreign Count of the name of De Meurville,

who was with them a great deal when they were abroad."

"I hope his person is as sentimental as his name," observed Lady Georgiana; "it would be a thousand pities to have so pretty a one thrown away upon an uninteresting man. What is the Count *like*, Mr. Winters?"

"What *ought* he to be like, Lady Georgiana, to justify his possessing so romantic a title?"

"He *ought*," said her Ladyship, laughing, "to be a fine, sallow, sublime sort of Werter-faced man."

"Oh! I understand," returned Mr. Winters,

'With mustachios that give what we read of so oft,
The dear Corsair expression—half savage, half soft.'

Well, I believe he is something of the kind—he looks like a hero, like a lover."

"Perhaps he is a lover?" observed the Countess of Malverton.

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Winters; "but I

do not think at the Hermitage he has any individual attraction ; he appeared to me equally attentive to all the Misses Mandeville."

" How many of them are there at home now ?" asked Mrs. Vigers.

" Five," returned Mr. Winters ; " which includes all the daughters but Mrs. Balfour, the eldest."

" And did Sir William and Lady Mandeville take all their family abroad ?" asked the Countess.

" Oh no," said Mr. Winters ; " only two or three of the daughters were taken. Their going abroad, indeed, I believe was more occasioned by the delicate health of one of them, than by the embarrassments of the Baronet's affairs, to which it was generally attributed."

" Is Miss Mandeville at all pretty now ?" asked Lady Malverton. " I recollect seeing her," added her Ladyship, without waiting for an answer, " at the first ball she was ever at,

when they said she was only sixteen, and she was certainly a beautiful-looking creature ; health and joy seemed to light up eyes which too often sparkled with malicious triumph or ill-suppressed envy, and the brilliant colouring of her cheeks was unimpaired by ill health and late hours."

"She is still pretty," said Mr. Winters, "from possessing regularity of features and gracefulness of figure ; but lying on the sofa, hanging over the fire, or going out muffled up even in July, you would not recognize Madelina, the blooming Madelina, to whom the 'Morning Post' used to be so complimentary."

"Let me see, what is the name of the third daughter?" said Lady Malverton. "She was a brunette, I know, and had been brought up chiefly in France."

"Charlotte, I think," observed Lady Georgiana, "she was called ?"

“ Yes,” said Miss Darcliff, “ and then comes Arabella.”

“ Ah, poor Arabella !” cried Mrs. Vigers ; “ she was no favourite, I recollect.”

“ No, nor is she now,” said Mr. Winters ; “ it is reserved for Miss Agnes, her next sister, to be the object of favoritism, to the exclusion of both Arabella and Rhoda, who is the youngest.”

“ Agnes was never much at home, I think,” observed the Countess : “ she lived with her grandfather and grandmother when a child, and was at school afterwards till she went abroad.”

“ The evening before I left the Hermitage,” said Mr. Winters, “ as the young people were dancing, and the rest of the company employed with cards and conversation, Lady Mandeville began talking to me about each of her daughters, of some with pride and delight, as being all she could wish—of others with regret and concern, as neither gratifying her fondness

as a mother, nor her vanity as a woman. I told her, jokingly, that I was afraid she spoilt Agnes. ‘I fear I do,’ she replied, ‘but I cannot help it, she is such a pretty creature, and so affectionate,’ she added, “that to see her clinging about and caressing me, you would think she had but just left her nursery.”

“I owned that this was very charming, and very amiable, that a girl so beautiful, and so admired, possessing feelings so warm and so natural, must render her an object highly beloved! ‘But my dear Lady Mandeville,’ said I, ‘are you certain that you have equally encouraged regard and affection in those daughters, of whose coldness and indifference you complain? Have you not, think you, been a little influenced by the coral lips of Agnes, and beautiful eyes of Madelin?’

“ ‘Ah! poor Madelin,’ she said, waving my question; ‘I love her because she was my only companion when Adelaide was married.

She was the only one to go out with me, and we were always together. But as for Agnes,' she continued, with an appealing look ; ' any extraordinary affection I may have for her she has won for herself, there was nothing to prejudice me in her favour, for she was never with me till lately, and I scarcely knew her when I saw her.' "

" You may imagine," said Mr. Winters, " I had nothing more to say on the subject. Lady Mandeville best knew whether caprice or better motives influenced her in her conduct towards her children."

The Countess of Malverton appeared thoughtful when Mr. Winters had finished speaking ; she was probably thinking, that if he was so penetrating in discovering, and so struck with the unjust partialities of Lady Mandeville, who, from having many daughters, had some little excuse, it not being very likely that they had each equal claims to her regard,

how much more must he be struck with the injustice of her own conduct, who, with only two daughters to divide her affections between, allowed them to be almost entirely usurped by the youngest, as it was generally known she did.

Whatever were the sentiments which occupied the mind of the Countess, and however inconsistent such professions were with her own actions, she expressed her full sense of the injustice parents did their children, who, without any cause, except perhaps superiority of external advantages, gave their affections to some in preference to the rest; but at the same time could not help adding (secretly in justification of herself), that she thought one child's being more affectionate than another certainly entitled him or her to superior regard.

Mr. Winters told her Ladyship in a gentle, yet decided tone, that he was convinced there was scarcely one instance in a thousand in which

greater affection on the part of the child would not be found, if the source from which it sprung could be traced, to have been first fostered by some early predilection on that of the parent.

The Countess said nothing more on the subject. And Lady Georgiana exclaimed with vivacity, “Mr. Winters, you must commence a game of chess with me as soon as you have finished your tea, that I may make an attempt to retrieve my lost colours; I cannot sustain defeat.”

“You already feel that you were born to conquer, do you, my lady?” said Mr. Winters smiling.

“It is woman’s destiny,” observed Lady Malverton, “to conquer or be conquered; in every thing she has feelings too warm ever to remain neuter, or preserve a medium.”

“With some exceptions,” said Mr. Winters, “I do know ladies unblessed with that warmth

of feeling, which, however it may, when ill-directed, prove the bane, as may all other advantages, yet under due regulation gives the highest zest to all worldly happiness. Without it the woman may be respectable, but cannot be amiable ; the wife may not improbably command esteem, but certainly cannot warm affection ; and the parent may be venerated, but will not be loved."

" That the absence of a certain share of sensibility," observed Mrs. Vigers, " in a sex of which it is supposed, and, in some degree, ought to be the characteristic, is to be lamented, there can be no doubt ; but do you not think, Mr. Winters, that the woman who only possesses portion enough of it to render her susceptible of enjoyment, and who can sustain misfortunes of any kind with calmness and fortitude ; whom the loss of a husband, beloved child, or cherished friend, has not power to overwhelm ; and whom the possession of such

blessings, with every other, still leaves mistress of herself, is the woman, who, if she does not enjoy most of the goods of this life, is at least sensible to fewest of its ills?"

"Oh, can there be a doubt!" cried the Countess of Malverton, with the enthusiasm of one who knew from experience that feeling may heighten the amiability, but adds little to the happiness of its possessor. "Can there be a doubt that the character you have described would be of all others the most desirable?"

"This philosophical speech, from Lady Malverton, the most feeling of women!" said Mr. Winters: "is she, like her mother, going to be the advocate of dispositions the most opposite to her own, of apathy and cold-hearted selfishness?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Winters," returned Lady Malverton; "I would only detract from feeling to add to usefulness; convinced as I am, that

an excess of the former is incompatible with the latter. I speak from experience," continued her Ladyship: " how often have I wished to be more of the philosopher, and less of the woman; never so much, I believe, as when my lord was dangerously ill, and could bear to see none but myself about him; how much more service I should have been of to him could I have controlled my anguish and despair, and ministered with complacency to his wants. When I lost my lovely boy, what did I not suffer! philosophy could not restrain one tear; reason had lost its empire over my heart!"

" But, Lady Malverton, such feelings are so amiable, so calculated to endear you to the objects of them, that none can wish you otherwise," observed Mr. Winters.

" Indeed," Mr. Winters, " you would not say so had you seen me when that darling girl was ill," said Lady Malverton, looking at her

daughter: "you would certainly have pronounced the mother a more pitiable object than the child—for that child was apparently about to be removed to a better world; you would have seen in me a useless, wretched creature, unable to administer to the feelings of others, or support my own—a victim to sensibility, as little to be envied as to be proud of."

"In such a situation," observed Mr. Winters, "you were certainly deprived of the greatest of consolations—that of being their consoler and support. However, Lady Malverton, surrounded with such inestimable friends as you are, and so large a portion of this world's blessings, your feelings must be much oftener exercised in joy than sorrow."

"Thank God! they certainly are," said the Countess; "I have every reason to be grateful to the Bestower of such advantages."

"Well, Lady Georgiana," cried Mr. Win-

ters, rising, “you seem prepared with the honours of war, and presuming on a very speedy conquest, by the late hour you have chosen for commencing.”

“Yes,” said Lady Georgiana; “I am impatient to retrieve the honours I lost in my last engagement with you; my spirit only rises with defeat.”

“May it never have to yield to proud necessity, Lady Georgiana,” returned Mr. Winters, as he commenced the game.

“Yield! oh, no, Sir,” said her Ladyship, with a look too meaning not to be in earnest; “my heart is too proud to bend, it would sooner break.”

“Die of a broken heart, Georgiana!” exclaimed the Countess. “God forbid such a lot should ever be yours!”

“You need not make yourself unhappy, Mamma,” cried Lady Georgiana, with the greatest *sang-froid*; “I have not the least

fancy for it. I only adopt the Stafford motto," continued she, in a half-laughing, half-contemptuous manner—

" You may break but not bend me."

It has been frequently remarked that trifling every-day circumstances influence the opinions we form of others more than any striking actions. Vanity may incite the latter, but cannot always pervade and actuate the former. It was a combination of apparently trivial circumstances which Mr. Winters had remarked in the conduct and manners of Lady Georgiana Granville during the time she had been residing at the Abbey with her mother, and even previously when she used to come from London or Granville Castle on a visit, that led him to suspect her temper and dispositions in no way accorded with her outward form—that all was not as heavenly within as it certainly was without. Mr. Winters very much regretted that

this should be the case in the daughter and grand-daughter of friends whom he so highly esteemed as he did the Countess of Malverton and Mrs. Vigers : he lamented that the former, whom he was convinced possessed a very superior mind, should indulge such a fatal partiality for her child as to overlook all her faults, and that the latter, instead of fondly palliating them as she usually did, gave not reproof and advice, to which her age and example would have added so much weight and authority. It was neither indolence nor want of penetration to perceive her grand-daughter's faults that prevented Mrs. Vigers from doing so, but a natural leniency of disposition which made her always averse to any thing like reproach or severity ; she was one who “ hopeth all things,” and therefore indulged the idea, that as Georgiana grew older, she would see the necessity of conquering tempers and dispositions which would prove inimical to happiness. In the

meantime the fair subject of this digression continued the philosophical game of chess with as much prudence as if she were the most sedate of mortals, while she talked and laughed in a manner that proved her to be the least. Indeed, so great, so versatile were the talents of this young lady that she seemed to acquire by inspiration what most others could only gain with difficulty and pains. It was just ten, and the supper-table laid, when the victorious Georgiana announced her triumph.

“ You have no quarter, Mr. Winters,” cried her Ladyship; “ my queen has carried the day after all.”

“ Or rather the night,” said Mr. Winters.

“ And yet,” continued her Ladyship, “ she was too magnanimous to take advantage of the oversight you made at the beginning.”

“ And I am sure,” said Mr. Winters, “ Lady Georgiana, more magnanimous still, will not triumph over a fallen enemy.”

“That would be very unconqueror-like,” said Lady Georgiana, laughing.

The family now assembled for prayers; after the conclusion of which, and supper, Mr. Winters wished the ladies good night and returned home.

CHAPTER II.

“ Mothers, 'tis said in days of old,
Esteem'd their girls more choice than gold ;
Too well a daughter's worth they knew,
To make her cheap by public view.”

From Agnes Mandeville to Catharine Morton.

“ Hermitage, July 18th.

“ **MY DEAREST CATHARINE,**

“ You made me promise to write to you as soon as I could after my arrival here, and when you observe the date of this you will allow that I have lost no great time in fulfilling my engagement, taking into consideration, as I

trust you will, that I live in the midst of company, and have scarce a moment to myself but when I retire to my room at night. The shortness of our stay in London prevented me from seeing you so often as I could have wished, and circumstanced as I was, entirely from being with you alone, or I should have been anxious to have talked over old times, inquired after favourite companions, and recalled to your recollection, though I hope that would have been unnecessary, for I think you do not forget the happy vacation we spent together at my grandmamma's in Northumberland. I trust I shall be more fortunate when next I go to town, or that before then, emancipated from the restraints of school, I shall have the pleasure of seeing my dearest Catharine here. In the meantime, I must proceed to inform you that we arrived safely to a late dinner on the evening of the day we left town, and found every thing as comfortable and exact as if we

had never quitted it. I entertained a perfect recollection of the house, though it was so long since I was an inmate of it; and found the delightful galleries, passages, and staircases, which I had begun to think my imagination had transferred from romance to reality.

“ But I dare say you are all this time more anxious to hear about my cousin’s marriage, which I promised I would give a circumstantial account of when I wrote, and have not hitherto said a word about. It was solemnized a few days ago, and in what was called a private manner, but, in my opinion, bordered much more on a public. The bride herself, who, by the by, was a mere country girl whom Charles took a fancy to, and is as awkward and clumsy as you can imagine, with rather a pretty face, was, for the fortnight preceding, and has been almost ever since, alternately dissolved in tears of agitation, or covered with blushes of confusion. Her bridal dress consisted of white satin

and lace, selected by her mother, who, with another of her daughters, was here for a few days at that time. The latter and myself were bride's-maids ; neither Madelina or Charlotte would be. The former has taken an unmerciful antipathy to poor Caroline, and spares no opportunity of letting her see it ; and Charlotte, if she has not actually done so too, seemed to think it would be paying her too a great compliment. So, out of charity, as Arabella would not be one, I undertook the office ; of which I afterwards repented, for Caroline, bashful to the last degree, put me forward on every occasion to answer for her, and return thanks for any compliment or congratulation that was made her. Indeed, she had nearly had me married in her place, for Mr. Winters, the clergyman, began the ceremony as we were both standing near Charles and mistook me for the bride.—Dancing succeeded to the marriage, and Colonel Blomberg, a gentleman who is stopping

here, talked so much nonsense to me during the evening that I began to think he wished to have another edition of it, in which he and I should be the actors. Indeed, it put all the gentlemen on the agreeable; there was nothing but looks, sighs, and flirtations: when I say all, I must except the Count de Meurville, whom you tell me you so much admire from what you saw of him when in London with us; for he certainly was not in particular spirits that evening, whatever was the cause. Apropos to him; you must not take it into your head that he is my lover, for it is high treason against the lady to whom he is betrothed, and to whom, on his return to Germany, will be resigned his heart, his honours, his possessions, and himself! If you wish to strike up a courtship between me and any one, you may fix on Lord Yalbroke, for he pays me more attention than he does to any one else, and that, by the by, is not saying much, for he

does not trouble any one with his politeness. But however, to make up for his eccentricity, of which he has an immensity, he writes divine poetry, and acts tragedy like Macready or Kean. I must now conclude this long letter, for Arabella announces breakfast. Adieu ! my dearest Kate ; remember me to Fanny Rivers, and believe me as ever,

“ Yours affectionately,

“ AGNES MANDEVILLE.”

The Mandevilles, as our readers may rather suspect, were one of those gay, dissipated families, keeping open house, dressing, and dashing, making themselves more conspicuous in a county than nobility itself, whose tables are always furnished with the rarities of the season, and whose drawing-rooms are for ever brilliant with lights, music, and company : in which the daughters, among whom some are beauties, some wits, and others neither,

are instructed by their worldly-minded mother to play off the parts for which they are best fitted ; the wits to ensnare by their vivacity, the beauties by their charms, and the plain by their good-humour ; and whose manners are of that dubiously agreeable kind, which those who secretly feel it rather an honour to be intimate with them, may pronounce “ charming,” “ delightful,” “ agreeable,” but those who are not under similar impressions, and are a little annoyed at being eclipsed by them in living, scruple not to denominate “ overbearing,” “ insolent,” and “ assuming.”

In dress the Miss Mandevilles frequently affected an elegant rusticity ; they would wear bonnets of the coarsest straw, such as they themselves laughingly observed “ the children of their charity school would not condescend to,” wrap themselves in cloaks of the roughest description, and put on shoes of the thickest kind, aware that all this affected hardiness but showed

off to greater advantage the delicate forms they affected to invigorate and made more striking the elegance of their appearance in the evening; when, decorated with flowers and muslin, they danced like sylphs, or played like seraphs, in the elegant apartments over which they presided, leaving an agreeable doubt on the mind of some bewildered young heir as he retires to his room for the night, whether the Miss Mandevilles, adorned with wild roses in their bonnets in the morning, or glittering with ornaments in the evening, looked most beautiful:—whether Madelin, Agnes, or whoever he had fixed his admiration on, was most calculated to grace a cottage or a court! As it sometimes happens, the person by whose indulgence and liberality all these triumphs for beauty were occasioned and increasing gaieties were kept up, was the only one who neither enjoyed or received any benefit from them, either in gratitude from his daughters, or affec-

tion from his wife, namely, the Baronet himself. Devoted to the improvement of his grounds, and interested in the state of his tenantry, Sir William left to his Lady-wife the management of the whole establishment at home ; allowed her to fill the house with what company she chose, provided she and her daughters took upon themselves the care of the ladies, and his sons the entertainment of the gentlemen. Possessing such easiness and indolence of temper, Sir William became a cypher in his own house, and was only recognized as its master by sitting at the lower end of his dinner-table, generally in a heavy contemplative mood, which might have led, on the part of the guests who filled it, to a disagreeable suspicion of being unwelcome to him, had not the perfect *sang-froid* of Lady Mandeville, and fascinating gaiety of her daughters, seemed to intimate those looks too customary to be regarded.

CHAPTER III.

“ The passions are a numerous crowd,
Imperious, positive, and loud ;
Curb these licentious sons of strife,
Hence chiefly rise the storms of life :
If they grow mutinous and rave,
They are thy masters, thou their—slave.”

MR. WINTERS had judged very right, that the temper of Lady Georgiana Granville bore not the least analogy to her mind and outward form : His opinion was founded on what he had observed at the different times he had been in company with her ; had he been constantly in her society, it would have required but little

penetration to discover it—her want of it was obvious to all around her, as was the doating fondness of her mother. A circumstance which took place when the family at the Abbey assembled at breakfast, was one among many instances of the pride and passion which characterized this young lady.

The footman brought in with the letters, which always arrived in the morning, a parcel that had come down by the coach, containing shoes and boots, ordered by the Countess for herself and daughter.

“ Oh, my boots !” cried Lady Georgiana, tearing open the parcel. “ I hope they are exactly in every respect the kind I desired.”

Now our readers must know that Lady Georgiana had set her affections on a pair of boots of a most uncommon description which she had seen worn by a young lady, lately arrived from Paris, and was determined not to be content till she had procured a similar pair.

These admired boots were composed of a beautiful geranium-coloured kid, mottled with black, and ornamented with crimson laces, fringes, and tassels: and when instead of them was sent a pair of a different, and as would appear in the eyes of many, a prettier colour, accompanied by a very civil note from the maker, mentioning the trouble he had taken to try and procure the kind she wished, but had found it impossible to get the kid, and therefore taking the liberty of sending as substitute a pair of the most fashionable make and colour, her indignation exceeded all bounds; she declared he was the most lazy, presumptuous, impertinent blockhead that ever was dealt with, not to get what she wished, and to dare send her what she had never ordered. Old-fashioned, hateful things, that looked as if they were made for a “farmer’s daughter,” that she would sooner go barefoot than wear; “it was

beyond all enduring, all bearing!" in reality it was only beyond her own. She flung the beautiful boots away with an exclamation of passion and contempt. In the meantime the Countess had only expostulated with her daughter in the tender language of pity and commiseration, ill-calculated to have any effect on, or subdue a violent-tempered girl, towards whom the stern voice of command, or more indignant one of justly incensed anger and reproach, was most appropriate. "My sweet child, my own dear Georgiana, do try on the boots; indeed my pretty girl they will become your little feet. You may be sure the man did all in his power to try and get the sort you wished, but you know how scarce that kind of kid is; indeed you do, my darling Georgy." Such was the weakly fond language used by the Countess.

"I know nothing," cried the self-willed, passionate darling, "but that he could not have

tried, and that I will never wear the boots as long as I live, nor employ him again, and so you may do as you choose with them; and all you can say for him, or the nasty things, or any thing else, shall not make me alter my resolution." So saying she burst into an agony of crying!

Astonishing as it may appear, the tears of Georgiana had more effect in softening the Countess, and inclining her to do whatever her daughter wished, than all her impertinence had to irritate her. If they had been those of contrition, it would have been little to be wondered at, but they proceeded from passion no longer able to vent itself in words.

" My own lovely girl," said the Countess, " you shall not fret yourself on account of these boots. I will return them; I will do anything for you; but you must not, you shall not cry."

“Look, Georgiana,” said Miss Darcliff, “at these pretty shoes, are they not to your taste? you wished for black satin.”

“Nothing that is come is to my taste,” replied her Ladyship sharply: “as for those shoes I am sure they are twice too large for my feet, and even if they fitted me, I would send them back.”

In the meantime Mrs. Vigers was employed in reading a letter which she had received from her husband, who had been for about a fortnight past in London on some business, and now wrote to express his intention of being with them at dinner that day, accompanied by Mr. Granville, the brother-in-law of the Countess of Malverton; but the old lady was not so engrossed with the letter as to be regardless of her grand-daughter’s conduct, and several times remonstrated with her on its impropriety, for though Mrs. Vigers never punished,

she certainly did not encourage, as the Countess did too much, the temper and obstinacy of the young lady; and perhaps would often have noticed them more severely, but from fear of wounding the feelings of her daughter, whose greatest weakness she knew was her adoration of Georgiana. On this occasion, however, the impertinence of her behaviour was too glaring, and Mrs. Vigers could not help saying, “ Well, Alicia, if you do condescend to humour Georgiana any more, I shall not be surprized at any conduct in her.”

Lady Malverton had too much sense not to feel, that in caressing the sullen beauty she was lessening her own dignity and the respect of her child, and she had too much veneration for her mother, and with all her affection for Georgiana, was not so deaf to reason as to continue to do so. When the Countess withdrew her arms from about her daughter, no

look of sorrow, no word of penitence, escaped the young lady.

In the fine auburn eyes of Georgiana still trembled the tears of passion and resentment, and on those cheeks, whose colour did not usually exceed that of the Provence rose, now burned the deep glow of the carnation ; while the scarlet lips, which seemed intended only to smile, pouted in proud defiance ! Each fair feature was capable of this metamorphose ! She threw back the thick ringlets that hung over her forehead, and pushing them under her cap, took up the boots that were lying near her, and flung them to the other end of the room.

Even the Countess would put up with no more. “ Georgiana,” she said in a resolute voice, “ if your passions make you so far forget yourself, you shall not forget what is due to us ; leave the room, and let me not see you till

in a very different frame of mind. I have indulged you to folly, I know I have, and this is my reward, that you are grown so passionate and overbearing you would be actually hated were you surrounded with friends less disposed to make allowances. You will never, Georgiana, as you mix in the world, find any one willing to put up with your faults as they now are. Go, stubborn girl ! I can be provoked beyond endurance even by you."

Had not her mother made signs to her to remain, Georgiana would have flung out of the room long before she had finished speaking ; for all advice or reproof was thrown away upon this young lady, when pride and passion usurped the place of reason.

" That girl will one day break my heart !" said the Countess, as her daughter left the apartment, " and I shall deserve it. What will her father say, when he returns to England,

and sees no change in her temper? What will he think of me?"

* * * * *

Lady Malverton used frequently and bitterly to lament the pride, the passion, the vanity of her daughter; but she did not sufficiently trace the source from whence those evils sprung. Want of discipline on the part of her parents, however it might have increased them, could not alone have occasioned them; for at the period when right or wrong dispositions receive their colouring, the Earl and Countess were mixing too much in the great world to influence their bias. Had they placed about her persons uninterested in flattering, impartial in judgment, Georgiana might have turned out a different girl: early good impressions would have counteracted the effect of future mismanagement; at least it would have been likely to do so.

As we have mentioned the Countess of Mal-

verton having another and an elder daughter, it may seem surprizing that Lady Georgiana should be the centre of interest and regard ; but circumstances had contributed to render her an object of importance.

Immediately subsequent to the marriage of Lord and Lady Malverton, he, then Viscount Dalkeith, was appointed to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, and for three years filled the office of Viceroy in a manner the most satisfactory ; at the end of which time he resigned the honours he had gained in that country, to take possession of those the death of the Earl, his father, had prepared for him in his own.

On the return of the Earl to London, he received a very distinguishing proof of Royal approbation, being visited by the King himself, then Prince Regent, at Malverton House ; who, in terms the most flattering, expressed the high sense he entertained of the excellency of his administration in Ireland, in a country

where it was, he knew, peculiarly difficult to maintain steady authority and unprejudiced judgment. That he had happily succeeded in doing so, the esteem and affection he had gained in that country, the fame which had spread to his own, bore ample testimony.

The Prince's wish to reward the Earl for such services was, he politely declared, only equalled by his inability to do so in an adequate manner; but if Lord Malverton could himself point out any situation that he would think worthy of accepting, and in the power of His Highness to grant, it should be his.

What was there that the heart of a subject, thus flattered and encouraged, would not have dictated. That of the Earl, prompted every sentiment of gratitude, loyalty, and love, even more eloquently than his words expressed them, but he could not be prevailed on to name a recompence for services to which he laid no claim, and therefore the Prince him-

self nominated him to a high office in the state. During the residence of the Earl and Countess of Malverton in Ireland, they had had two children: the eldest a girl, who received the name of Alicia; the other a boy, who survived his birth but a few months. And a short time after the return of her Ladyship to England, she was confined of her third child, to whom the Prince and two of his Royal sisters signified their intention of standing sponsors. On this intimation being given, every thing was prepared that could give splendour and *eclat* to the christening of the distinguished infant: and on the eighteenth of January, in a magnificent apartment hung with crimson, lighted with a thousand tapers, festooned with laurel, carpeted with velvet, the child supported in the arms of a Princess, in presence of the first Peers and Peeresses of Britain, received the names of Georgiana Augusta Frederica; and had renounced for her

by Royal lips the pomps and vanities of this world.

Ushered into life, if we may be allowed the term, under such splendid auspices, Lady Georgiana heard from her cradle nothing but the language of adulation and fondness; was told that she was a beauty, an heiress, an angel, and every thing about her confirmed the flattering tale.

In the persons selected by the Earl and Countess to educate their daughters, they thought they had chosen those best qualified for the purpose; and the improvement of Lady Alicia, and excellency of her dispositions, confirmed the idea; but the truth was, that this young lady had profited by the advice and instruction of an amiable and excellent governess, who had implanted good dispositions in her mind, at a time when her sister was considered too young—too delicate—but was in reality too spoiled, to share the advantage; and when

the period arrived at which it was thought proper for Lady Georgiana to receive instruction with her sister, this invaluable preceptor was no more. The person who supplied her place was highly recommended to Lord and Lady Malverton, and principally to her care did they intrust the future education of their daughters. Lady Alicia, the foundation of whose character had been laid by previous good instructions, continued every day to improve in mind and disposition, though the lady under whose care she now was, either from indolence, or considering them a point of little moment, paid no attention to the latter. Lady Georgiana, from not having known till this period any masters but her will, was impatient of control, high-spirited, and commanding ; but at the same time ambitious of improvement, indefatigable in exertion, and highly-gifted by nature ; in short, the last girl in the world to be put under the tuition of a person whom

indolence deterred from correction. The Earl and Countess, from mixing much in the great world, had little time to attend to their children, and when they did, seeing them improved in every external accomplishment, they fondly flattered themselves their hearts and dispositions were equally cultivating, though they could not watch their developement. They sometimes noticed, certainly with concern, the passionate temper of their youngest daughter; but still trusted that education, precept, and example, were counteracting, what they were in reality rather abetting; and that Georgiana, when convinced of its necessity, would improve in temper as much as she did in everything else. In this hope, however, they were disappointed. *Fifteen* found Lady Georgiana an angel, indeed, in person, and highly accomplished in mind and manners, but with a temper which was at times ungovernable. It was about this period that the Earl of Malverton,

finding his pecuniary circumstances much embarrassed by the expensive course of life which the public situations he had for many years occupied led him into, considered it necessary to accept the Governorship of India, which was offered him; where, though his expenses might be greater, his income would be proportionate: and the Countess with her daughters had determined to accompany him, when Lady Georgiana, whose health had been for some time past declining, was pronounced on the verge of a rapid consumption, and the air of Devonshire was recommended for her. Thither, therefore, Lady Malverton went on the departure of her husband; not very sanguine indeed in her hopes, for Devonshire was merely advised by the physicians as a resort, during the interim that must elapse before final arrangement could be made for her going to Italy or Madeira. However, to the inexpressible joy of her mother, the salubrious air of Devon-

shire effected that change in the health of Georgiana which it had been thought a foreign climate alone could do; and Lady Malverton, after a six months' residence there, returned to London, with her darling daughter restored to health, animation, and beauty. Where to fix her future residence was now the doubt which occupied the mind of the Countess: to remain at Malverton House with her mother and brother-in-law she would not think of, and to reside at Granville Castle would oblige her to maintain an establishment larger than during the absence of her husband would be agreeable. While these ideas perplexed the mind of her Ladyship, she received a letter from her parents, insisting on her coming down to Surrey with her daughters, and remaining with them during Lord Malverton's absence abroad. The offer was too tempting to be rejected, and after some pecuniary preliminaries on the part of the Countess, which their generosity made

them averse to complying with, but her delicacy would not concede, Lady Malverton, leaving her eldest daughter Alicia, who was of an age to mix in company, under the care of the Countess Dowager in London, went to Surrey with Lady Georgiana.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Pleasure is all the reigning theme,
The noon-day thought, the midnight dream ;
Yet take it for a sacred truth,
That pleasure is the bane of youth.”

ON the morning of that unfortunate day which we fear lost Lady Georgiana all credit for amiability with our readers ; on which she displayed tempers that would make a father tremble to call her his child, or a lover his mistress ; on the morning of that day, the Countess of Malverton, Mrs. Vigers, and Miss Darcliff, set out to call at Hermitage, the

seat of Sir William and Lady Mandeville. The weather was remarkably fine, and the roads being good, the distance from Abbeville, which was three miles, seemed but short. The scenery of the Baronet's estate struck them as appearing to greater advantage than it had done before. It was now, indeed, the midst of summer, and every thing in the highest state of perfection. Under the luxuriant oaks of the Park the deer alternately ranged and reposed, while throughout the green woods pleasingly re-echoed the warbling of birds, the whistling of peasantry, the roar of waterfalls; and along the river which interspersed the domain, laburnums hung their showy branches, willows drooped their graceful boughs, and acacias waved their yellow hair. On one side of the estate the eye was met by a cheerful group of orchards, cottages, and gardens; on another by richly planted hills, and browsing sheep;

and again, by ivy-covered ruins, beyond which the village church peeped through ash-trees and tall poplars.

“ The sight of this place,” said Mrs. Vigers, as they drove up the avenue, or rather labyrinth, “ tempts one to exclaim, as a friend of Dr. Johnson’s did of the seat of Lord Scarsdale; ‘ Surely the proprietor of all this must be happy ! ’ ”

“ If you did,” observed the Countess, assuming mock gravity, “ I should reply in the words of his philosophical friend, ‘ All this excludes but one evil, poverty.’ ”

“ Well, then, I will not venture,” said Mrs. Vigers; “ I was not aware before of being in company with a philosopher.”

“ Nor are you,” cried her Ladyship, instantly laughing, and changing her tone. “ I am a woman; and would not change that title, and the privileges annexed to it, for all the philosophy in the universe.”

“ How beautiful those peacocks look,” remarked Miss Darcliff, pointing to some which were pacing on the outside of the glass-houses.

“ Yes, their plumage looks very splendid,” said Mrs. Vigers ; regarding the gaudy creatures, who displayed their rich tails to the sun.

“ There is a something about Hermitage,” observed the Countess, thoughtfully, “ which I always very much admired ; and I recollect Lord Malverton used too : it presents so many contrasts in its scenery. *Here* the dark umbrageous shades of ancient taste ; *there* the light and elegant improvements of modern days.”

“ It certainly presents a happy combination,” replied Mrs. Vigers ; “ but here comes its master. I hope we see you well, Sir William,” said Mrs. Vigers, as the Baronet approached, and she pulled the check-string of the carriage.

“ Perfectly, I thank you,” returned he : “ to judge from your looks, and those of your com-

panions, it would be unnecessary to make a similar inquiry. I presume," continued he, "you are going on to see the ladies."

"Yes," returned the Countess, "we hope to find them all well and at home. In driving up here we have been admiring the beautiful appearance of your estate, Sir William; I think I never saw it look so lovely!"

"Why, yes," returned the good-natured, unaffected Baronet; "the works of Nature look very well, and I hope you will by and by come with me and see those of Art."

"It will afford me great pleasure," said Lady Malverton; "I have not forgot your grapery, your conservatory, or, indeed, anything connected with the Hermitage."

"You are very kind, Countess," replied Sir William; "but in the meantime I must not be so selfish as to detain you any longer from the ladies." So saying, the Baronet left them, and the carriage drove on.

“ A good-natured man, poor Sir William is,” observed Mrs. Vigers.

“ Yes,” returned the Countess, “ but he never appears, I think, in very good spirits. I should be inclined to suspect he was not very happy in his own family. Lady Mandeville is very little, at least she used to be, the kind of woman to consult the comforts, or regard the wishes of a husband.”

“ No,” said Mrs. Vigers, “ Lady Mandeville’s element is not domestic life: of fireside enjoyments she can form no idea; the height of her ambition is for herself, her daughters, her house, and table, always to appear to the greatest advantage.”

“ As for the girls,” observed the Countess of Malverton, who with many good qualities, was frequently a little severe; “ every one knows they vote their father quite a bore, except when furnishing them with means to pursue their amusements: and I do not think,” added her

Ladyship, “that the sons appear at all attached to him.”

The avenue—or, as we have said before, more properly labyrinth—after winding for about three-quarters of a mile through plantations and thickets, which just left room for a carriage to pass, terminated by gentle declivities in a valley, darkened by the boughs of trees hanging over surrounding cliffs. In this valley or recess, was situated the Hermitage, whose turrets, for it was built like a castle, were scarcely visible till closely approached: this retreat seemed, indeed, like another world, a cool and delightful contrast to the sunshiny and gaudy scenery which surrounded it.

“I always fancy myself approaching some foreign monastery, or hermit-like abode,” said Miss Darcliff, as the carriage descended a gloomy terrace, quite overshadowed by trees which swept the top of it.

“ Yes,” replied Lady Malverton, “ it must be owned this approach is more in character with the name of the place than its inhabitants ; nobody would believe it led to the residence of of the gay, dashing Miss Mandevilles.”

“ As far as regard the owners,” observed Mrs. Vigers, “ the name Hermitage is about as appropriate as when applied to the palace of the Empress Catharine of Russia.”

“ Some of them have been riding, I presume,” said the Countess—“ I see their horses leading from the door. They came, I suppose, some other way, or we' should have fallen in with them,” added her Ladyship, as they stopped at the ivied porch, which was the entrance of the Castle, where were standing two of three footmen. “ Is Lady Mandeville at home ?” asked Mrs. Vigers, as one of them came forward.

“ Yes, Ma'am,” was the reply ; and just then, Mr. Damer the nephew, and Mr. Sidney

Mandeville, the son of the Baronet came forward.

“ I am glad to see you once more at Hermitage, ladies,” said the latter, as the carriage-door was opened, and he and his cousin went forward to hand them out.

“ Not more glad than we are to find ourselves here,” said Mrs. Vigers.

“ I was beginning to despair of ever having the pleasure of seeing you here again,” continued he.

“ Oh, you gave yourself soon up to despair, Mr. Mandeville,” said Lady Malverton, “ considering you have only been a fortnight in the country, and during that time we called twice, though you were out.”

“ A fortnight is an age,” returned he.

“ In your vocabulary alone, I believe,” said her Ladyship.

“ But you have not brought Lady Georgiana after all; how comes that, my Lady?”

Lady Malverton made some excuse for her daughter.

“ I do not know what the girls will say, do you, Sidney ?” said Mr. Damer.

“ Indeed I do,” replied he; “ they will be very angry; for I was telling them, Lady Malverton, of the beautiful girl who ran to call some one to take my horse, the day I rode to Abbeville, and they are dying to see her. Your charming daughter did not at first recollect me; I had been scorching under tropical suns since she saw me. But I assure you,” concluded he, as he began, “ my sisters will never forgive you; however, here they and my mother are, come to speak for themselves.”

And now Lady Mandeville, dressed in a handsome blue-coloured pelisse and silk bonnet, from which drooped flowers and ribbons, met them on the stairs: she was followed by her daughter Charlotte, and her niece, Mrs. Damer.

In the course of a minute, numerous expres-

sions of delight and regret fell from the lips of each lady: delight at seeing them again, regret that Lady Georgiana did not accompany them; joy at their appearing so well, sorrow that they did not come earlier; most of which exclamations, and many others, were repaid with interest on the other side.

“I am sure no one can doubt foreign air has agreed with you, Lady Mandeville,” said the Countess: “I never saw you, which is saying a great deal, look so well in my life, and Charlotte’s more blooming than ever. I believe I had not the honour,” her Ladyship was commencing, turning to Mrs. Damer, when Lady Mandeville interrupted her.

“You remind me of my omission,” she said, “I had forgotten to introduce Caroline to you —allow me to do it now.”

Mrs. Damer curtsied and smiled with the good-humoured air of one solicitous for acquaintance.

“ But we were talking of looks, Countess,” said Lady Mandeville ; “ and apropos to them, we should all look more comfortable were we to adjourn to the eating-room, instead of standing here on the stairs.”

So saying, she led the way across a corridor, through the billiard-room, and opening the door of an apartment which appeared filled with company, looked in, and asked “ Whether Madelin was there.”

“ No,” was the reply from a lady inside ; “ she went to the library.”

“ Well, then, I think we may as well go there too,” said Lady Mandeville, shutting the door ; “ for poor Madelin, I know, is so anxious to see you, and she has no idea you are here now. I was sitting in the room we have just left,” continued her Ladyship, addressing Mrs. Vigers and the Countess, “ when I heard a carriage, and though I could not see, from the thickness of the trees about the windows, whose

it was, the moment I heard the voices I knew it must be yours; but before I could tell Madelin so, she had run out of the room, thinking it was Mrs. and the Miss Stannards, whom she hates." As they were passing through a greenhouse, which was one entrance to the library, Charlotte Mandeville ran forward, and opening the door of the latter, announced, "Mrs. and Miss Stannard, and young Mr. Stannard, and Mr. Joseph Stannard," she provokingly added, knowing these two young men were the particular objects of her sister's aversion.

"Oh, what a cruel joke on poor Madelin," said Lady Mandeville, half laughing, as she and the rest stopped for a moment to hear what effect it would have on the fair one. "I will tell you, some day or other," softly whispered her Ladyship to the party that surrounded her, "what makes Madelin hate the Stannards so."

In the meantime, though they heard no noise, it seemed Miss Mandeville was evidently

going to make her escape, for Charlotte exclaimed in a voice the most provokingly loud, “ You cannot run away, Madelin, they are just at the door.” The party without considering this a signal to enter, did so, getting a look from Charlotte not to speak a word. Miss Mandeville, who had just had time to reseat herself on the sofa, and snatch up a book, did not deign to raise her eyes as they entered, but made a slight inclination of her head. Attired in a morning dress of the most elegant make and materials, with a shawl of the richest silk, and white Leghorn bonnet, from which drooped bunches of lilac, and a splendid veil, Miss Mandeville reclined on her seat with the nonchalance and sullen silence of a haughty princess. Near this young lady sat the Count de Meurville, a dark, interesting-looking young man, who appeared at a loss to know whether he was to speak, be introduced to them, or what to do. The Count had the air of one who felt

a little annoyed at being placed in such a predicament, though at the same time a smile played round his mouth.

· A fat, comical-looking woman, who was the French governess of the youngest daughter, was seated in an arm-chair at one end of the room, and suspended the settling of some flowers she had hitherto been arranging in a China basin, to look on at this mute scene, which apparently gave her great inclination to laugh. At a window was seated a young man, whose appearance, quite reserved and pensive, might incline a person to take him either for an humble cousin, or a tutor, or chaplain, or perhaps each, but not for a person privileged or inclined to break by a loud laugh the spell which hung over the company, and which had excited his attention enough to induce him to lay down the book he had been perusing, and gaze at each party alternately.

This dumb scene lasted for a minute or two :

Miss Mandeville would almost have given worlds, had she had them, to have accounted for the taciturnity of people whose loquaciousness generally disgusted her, without raising her eyes. The Count de Meurville whispered to her to “say something,” but drawing her hand before her face, she gave him a sidelong glance, which seemed to say “do you.” How much longer this agreeable silence might have continued is doubtful, had Miss Mandeville been able to restrain her curiosity, and the rest their risibility, but they were alike incapable of doing it. Turning round her head in as queen-like a manner as she could, Miss Mandeville looked at Madame, who was leaning back on her chair convulsed with laughter, a bunch of tulips in one hand, and a handkerchief in the other; her merriment did not greatly surprise the young lady, for she knew her to be easily amused; but when her eyes alighted on Mr. Percy, and saw him on the broad grin,

she really began to think there must be something very wonderful, for this gentleman was quite unused to the laughing mood, and her suspicions were confirmed by a loud laugh from Charlotte; it was then, indeed, that Madelina turned her eyes on the visitors, and surprized, delighted, recognized in them the Countess of Malverton, Mrs. Vigers, and Miss Darcliff. “ Oh, Charlotte, Charlotte !” was her first exclamation, “ what could induce you to deceive me so, to make me believe I had before me the persons I most hate ! Instead of those,” she continued, shaking hands with her friends, “ whom I most highly love and esteem !”

“ It is only an agreeable surprize,” returned Charlotte, with the greatest vivacity.

“ But that I see you,” said Miss Mandeville, sitting down by the Countess, “ I should almost think it too agreeable to be true. But tell me, how is Mr. Vigers, and how is Lord Malverton, and

Alicia, and Georgiana, and all my friends whom I have not seen for so long a time, but have never forgotten," continued the young lady, who was not the least abashed by the display of temper, which a wrong supposition had led her into.

Lady Malverton replied to all her inquiries, and told her the objects of them would be highly gratified when they heard that they retained so large a share of her remembrance.

Charlotte Mandeville now led over the Count de Meurville, and introduced him to Mrs. Vigers and the Countess. "This gentleman is dreadfully afraid, Lady Malverton," said she, "that you take him to be as silly as I am; but in honour I must assure you, if it had descended on him alone, the charm of that agreeable embarrassment would have been dissolved at the beginning, for he instantly knew, though he had never seen you, that neither your Lady-

ship, nor your companions, could be the persons I was making my sister believe, and he was wanting me to undeceive her."

Lady Malverton smiled and said, "It was impossible for the Count de Meurville to be implicated in any circumstances in which he could appear to disadvantage;" and her Ladyship, in terms the most flattering, expressed the pleasure she felt in being introduced to one whom she had heard spoken of so frequently and so highly.

The Count de Meurville bowed, and presently retired to a window, as if not wishing to interfere with the conversation of those who were so much older acquaintances.

In the meantime, Lady Mandeville having laughed unmercifully at Madelin's dignity, for so she denominated her daughter's pride, sat down to talk to Mrs. Vigers. In conversation at all times her Ladyship had that agreeability of manner, which would lead those whom

she addressed to suppose they were the objects of all others most interesting to her ; and in conversing with Mrs. Vigers, she did not, as some ladies would think themselves privileged to do, after a two years' residence abroad, affect to forget or despise every thing English, talk only of the society, fashions, and amusements of Paris ; the paintings, sculpture, and climate of Italy ; constantly refer to the Duke of this, and the Prince of that ; or overflow with anecdotes of what she said to the Duchess, and what the Duchess said to her. No ; to judge from Lady Mandeville's conversation with Mrs. Vigers, it might have been supposed she was interested only in what related to the Abbey and its inhabitants. Nothing concerning any individual connected with it escaped her memory. Only once did she allude to her foreign tour, and that was in saying how much two years absence from it enhanced the pleasure she felt in being

again at home. This manner, so flattering, so fascinating, was unfortunately too universal with Lady Mandeville to allow the idea of its being sincere. But whether it was, or only the acmé of politeness, it was certainly more agreeable than the chilling coldness and repulsive bluntness, which, dignified by the name of fashionable address, we so frequently meet with. High-born inanity or pride must surely have given ton to manners which may be an easy resort for the one, and excellent cloak for the other, but are at war with all good-breeding.

While Lady Mandeville was conversing with Mrs. Vigers, her daughters with the Countess, and Mrs. Damer with Miss Darcliff, to whom she seemed to have taken a fancy, the door opened, and Mr. Clermont Mandeville, the youngest son of Sir William, entered.

“ Well, Clermont,” said his mother, after the young man had paid his respects to the com-

pany, “where have you been this morning? Did you ride over to West-Olmsby?” alluding to the place where his living was situated.

“Yes,” replied the young divine, rolling his large sunny eyes around the room; “and saw my poor fag Lewson, who gave me a long account of all the old women and children in the parish. Poor fellow! I told him I was afraid he would exhaust himself in effecting the reformation of West-Olmsby; and to comfort him a little, held out the idea of its being probable he might be indulged in an hour’s more sleep next Sunday, as I entertained an intention of coming over myself to edify the good people with a sermon, the result of many months’ meditation.”

“You lazy fellow, I have not common patience with you,” said his sister Madelina, playfully shaking him by the shoulder. “Have you, Clifford?” she added with an appealing look at her cousin.

“I have given up Clermont’s reform,” an-

swered the Count de Meurville, throwing aside his book, and advancing towards them : “ I know I shouldn’t like to be his curate.”

“ No ; it’s not an enviable situation,” returned Clermont, laughing ; “ and I do pity that wretched being Lewson amazingly ; but as for my having all the business on my own hands, or half of it, ’tis an utter impossibility.”

“ Oh, Lewson is very happy ! depend upon it,” said the Count de Meurville, ironically. “ He is the little Bishop of West-Olmsby.”

“ Apropos to the little Bishop,” cried Clermont ; “ he is so scandalously poor he can never turn me out any thing to eat ; and after my ride I am always ravenous.”

“ There is nothing like riding to give an appetite,” observed Mr. Percy, breaking silence for the first time, as he closed his folio.

“ Nothing, upon my honour,” returned Clermont. “ I do think I could have eaten my groom,

Stoick himself, yesterday, I was so voracious ; and by my troth, he would not have been a very dainty morsel ; would he, Clifford ?”

“ I should rather imagine not,” replied the Count de Meurville.

“ But talking of eating,” continued Clermont, “ I must go in pursuit of some. Will you come with me, De Meurville ? I know Rosmullen was wanting to speak to you a few minutes ago, and he went into the saloon when he came in.”

“ *De tout mon cœur,*” replied the Count, following Mr. Mandeville to the door ; but then stopping for a moment, and turning to Miss Mandeville, he said, “ Will you fulfil your promise, Madelina, and take a drive with me in the curricle, by and by ?”

“ Oh, certainly,” she replied ; “ it is just three now ; if you will order your greys at half-past four, for I will be ready then, I am sure Lady Malverton will excuse me.”

“ My dear Miss Mandeville,” said the Countess, laughing, “ do you reckon on having a lease of us till then ?”

“ Oh, certainly !” returned she, laying her hands on those of the Countess in her own peculiarly caressing manner.

“ Now I am afraid,” said Mrs. Vigers, who had partly overheard what was saying, “ that we are preventing your driving or walking this beautiful morning.”

“ Oh, not in the least,” interrupted both Lady Mandeville and her daughters ; “ we are always in about this time for luncheon, and talking of it, we have made a great omission in not ordering some here,” continued Lady Mandeville, ringing the bell. “ We are so late in our hours,” her Ladyship said, addressing Mrs. Vigers.

“ I assure you we scarcely ever dine before eight, even in summer, nor have done breakfast entirely till a good deal past one.”

“ You have so many gentlemen usually at your house,” observed Mrs. Vigers; “ and they always contribute to make hours uncertain.”

“ Indeed they do, Mrs. Vigers,” said Miss Mandeville; “ those lords and masters of the Creation think of little but their own convenience.”

“ Instead of that,” added Charlotte, laughing, “ of the lovely sex whom they were born to please.”

“ I wonder we do not see something of the other girls,” said Lady Mandeville, as the door was opened, and the footman brought in refreshments. “ I wish, Berry,” her Ladyship continued, addressing the servant, “ you would go and look for the young ladies, and tell them to come to the library.”

As Lady Mandeville said this, Sir William came into the room. “ Why, ladies,” cried the Baronet, “ have all the gentlemen deserted you?”

“ We have rather deserted or discouraged them,” said Lady Mandeville, “ by taking no notice of them, we had so much to say to one another.”

“ Then, perhaps, I am an intruder,” said Sir William.

“ Indeed,” cried Miss Mandeville, in a half-bitter, half-jesting tone, “ I was just going to ask, papa, who authorized your entrance here with your farming boots.”

“ I hope these ladies will excuse me,” said Sir William, good-humouredly ; “ they know me of old to be but an English farmer.”

“ The most respectable of characters,” observed each lady.

“ I came to claim your promise, Lady Mallerston,” continued the Baronet, “ of coming out to look at some of my improvements in the glass-house way.”

“ My goodness ! Sir William,” said his wife, with as much suavity as she could assume

to conceal her real displeasure ; “ you seem to think every one is as much interested in your improvements and plans as you are yourself. Why, Lady Malverton has green-houses and hot-houses before her eyes every day ; the only difference she would see between our’s and those of Abbeville would be, the former being surrounded with brick and mortar, and the latter, I make no doubt, in capital repair.”

It was in vain that the Countess, half-rising from her seat to go, declared the pleasure it would give her, and the interest she took in every thing of that kind. Lady Mandeville would not hear of her going out, “ broiling in the sun,” as she expressed it ; though the heat was in reality far from intense.

“ I dare say, papa,” said his daughter Charlotte, “ that Lady Malverton would far rather have a specimen of the contents of the hot-house than go out to look at the glass-work of it.”

Before the Countess could say any thing the door opened, and Agnes Mandeville, followed by her sister Rhoda, and a gentleman, whose wild look and extraordinary attire pronounced him to be Lord Yalbroke, entered the library.

Agnes, dressed like Miss Mandeville, and with some beautiful flowers in one hand, was in person like her sister; but at that happy age, when the girl is just expanding into woman, more radiant, more elastic, more lovely! with eyes, that justifying every vanity, seemed to entertain no such feeling; and looks that, betokening every sweetness, seemed to defy every censure; there was a character of timidity and yet confidence, of wildness and yet dignity about her the most striking, and, combined with the angelic softness of her manner, the most enchanting that can be imagined. She spoke, and the same lovely diffidence pervaded her address; she listened, and the same bewitching wiliness played about her

features. Altogether, it was apparent that nature and education were not quite unanimous in their impulses; and that the dignity, reserve, and correctness, inculcated by the latter, were frequently at variance with the vivacity, playfulness, and thoughtlessness she received from the former.

Her sister Rhoda, destitute of the beauty, had not either the graces which distinguished Agnes; but there was in her countenance a sullen seriousness which, while it excited observation, forbade cordiality, and gave her the appearance of one forced into scenes in which she took no interest, and compelled into collisions only to appear to disadvantage, which was in reality the case: for Lady Mandeville, endeavouring only at the advancement of those of her children whom nature had rendered lovely and attractive, though she intended that all should be ultimately benefited by it, adopted as one method, that of keeping them in con-

stant contrast with those to whom Nature had been less beneficent; and whether in the persons of their own sisters, or in that of other people, the beautiful Miss Mandevilles were notoriously observed to be never long in contact with any but the plain, the uninteresting, and the repelling. In the meantime Lord Yalbroke, after having been introduced to the visitors, retired to a distant part of the room, where standing with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upwards, he seemed either taking its dimensions, calculating the expense of its hangings, or else solving some mathematical problem.

The library, in which all the party we have described were assembled, was in an octagon shape, containing two windows and two doors: the light proceeding from the former was agreeably softened by Venetian blinds, muslin shades, and silk draperies, and the latter being like the rest of the wall, covered with books, maps, or

pictures, could not be perceived when shut. On one table, covered with a scarlet cloth, was assembled every convenience for writing; on another of a similar description, only spread with purple, lay drawings of various kinds, while magnificent arm-chairs, couches, lamps, vases, globes, &c., were to be seen in every direction, and the fragrance proceeding from the green-house adjoining made each part of the room delightful. After the visitors had taken some refreshment, Sir William once more ventured to urge his plan of walking to the gardens, which, as Lady Malverton had made a sort of promise before to comply with, she considered herself unable to evade. Lady Mandeville raised no more objections; and the Countess, with some of the rest of the party, proceeded, her Ladyship walking first with Sir William and Agnes, Sidney Mandeville and Sophia Darcliff nearly close behind them. During their walk to the garden, Agnes was en-

deavouring to induce Lady Malverton to join them in a party they intended forming in a few days, to visit some grounds a few miles off. Whilst she was urging her request, and Lady Malverton deliberating, they were joined by the Count de Meurville.

“ Clifford,” said Agnes, looking up at him, “ what is the name of Colonel Blomberg’s place which we are to go and see next week ?”

“ Glen-morning, or Mount-morning, or something of that kind, I think,” returned the Count de Meurville.

“ It is Mount-morning,” observed the Baronet, who had stepped aside to speak to his steward, and again joined them.

“ Well, to Mount-morning you must come with us, Lady Malverton,” said Agnes.

“ Oh, indeed you must,” observed the Count de Meurville, “ if you were never there, for the place is worth going to see.”

“ The company of those whom I should go

with would be a sufficient inducement to me," said the Countess.

"We intend to make it a sort of gipsy party," said Agnes; "to go in our morning dresses, with large bonnets, to defend us from the sun, and take our dinner in a wood, or wilderness, or some such place, but not off mahogany tables."

"I suppose," said the Baronet, "you would like the party to dine by the side of a murmuring stream."

"Oh, no, Sir," returned Agnes, playfully, "we will have no murmuring streams in the environs, or we shall have to answer for some of the company getting an attack of the rheumatism."

"Miss Mandeville is right; is she not, Lady Malverton?" said the Count de Meurville, with an arch smile, "to provide against what she is so likely to suffer by herself?"

"I was thinking so," returned the Countess.

“ Oh, if I were only to think of myself,” observed Agnes, laughing, as she understood their inuendo; “ I would dine with equal pleasure on the banks of a river, or borders of a forest, on the shore of the sea, or summit of the mountain, and you know that,” said she, looking up at the Count de Meurville, “ for we have often dined in such places together.”

“ Oh yes,” returned the Count de Meurville; “ I can bear testimony to having dined in company with you on the banks of the Arno, and in the forests of Savoy, on the shores of the Adriatic, and ascent of the Alps.”

As he spoke they entered the garden in which seemed assembled all that could enchant the eye and exhilarate the senses. The walls streamed with the richest fruits, the terrace walks, in defiance of the care of the gardener, were swept by branches of drooping rose-bushes, and splendid carnations and pinks, while the sunny banks were alternately covered with lilies of

the valley, strawberries, and tulips; and mignonette and geranium, growing almost wild from the richness of the soil, seemed to waft the balsamic gales of Asia to the gardens of the Hermitage.

“Miss Mandeville, you look like Eve in Paradise,” said the Countess of Malverton to Agnes, as the latter, to procure her Ladyship some fine currants, had run up one of the beds, and in trying to pull the fruit encompassed herself in a thicket of roses.

“And never did Eve feel more pleasure in doing the honours of her garden to the angel Raphael, than I in doing those of mine to you,” replied Agnes, as she presented some white currants to Lady Malverton.

Sir William, who in the meantime had gone into the hot-house to pull some of his finest peaches and nectarines, now approached Lady Malverton, and requested her to take some of them, which she did, declaring she had never

seen any of such size and beauty ; and the Baronet insisted, that with the addition of some grapes and apricots, the basket should be put into her carriage.

They now went into her green-house, and were presently joined by Lady Mandeville, Mrs. Vigers, and Charlotte.

“ What became of you all ? ” inquired Sir William, as they entered, apparently amused by some incident in their walk.

“ Did you lose yourself in your own labyrinth, Lady Mandeville ? ” said the Count de Meurville.

“ Indeed I did,” replied her Ladyship ; “ I was so engaged in talking to Mrs. Vigers, that we took a wrong path, and have been going backwards and forwards to get into the right walk to the garden. Indeed, Sir William,” concluded her Ladyship, “ you should make some more direct way to the garden ; as it is, it

would require a geographical treatise on the subject."

"Perhaps, Lady Mandeville," said the Count de Meurville, "Sir William has some fair Rosamond concealed in these plantations.

"Perhaps so," returned her Ladyship, "but I have no clue of silk to guide me to her habitation."

"Those cross-walks and thickets were my mother's taste," observed Sir William.

"Just worthy of a lady's taste," said Sidney; "they like cross-purposes and double entendre in every thing."

"How can you say such a thing, Sidney?" exclaimed Agnes.

"Now confess, my charming sister," continued he, "that you would rather a gentleman looked at you, in a manner that led you to think he thought you a divinity, than told you in plain English you were one."

“ I should not be so vain as to believe either his looks or words,” replied Agnes: and as she spoke she darted an angel-glance at Clifford.

After having passed a considerable time in admiring the beauties of nature and the aids of art; in seeing foreign and domestic plants; they all, at the request of the visitors, who were in vain urged to stay and dine, returned to the Castle, on the terrace before which now stood an elegant curricle and beautiful greys. Miss Mandeville advanced to meet the party as they approached the house; her graceful morning dress exchanged for a pelisse, of (if possible) more becoming form and texture. About her neck and face, which were peculiarly delicate, she always wore a profusion of white lace, knowing from frequent study that it was becoming to her.

“ Miss Mandeville, you look very elegant,” said Mr. Fraser, a blunt, good-natured man

who now joined them, and seemed *un ami de famille*—“but should you look equally comfortable were a shower of rain to come on?”

“Oh, indeed I should, Sir,” replied Miss Mandeville, in her usual sprightly manner: “I never forget to provide for comfort; and regard it more than elegance, when they cannot be combined. In the first place there is a great deal of warmth in this pelisse, indeed many would laugh at me for putting it on in July, but I am always *chilly*”—concluded she with an affected shiver, “and then—”

“That fragile lilac, my dear Miss Mandeville,” interrupted he, “would cut but a poor figure in a shower of hail.”

“I do not intend to expose it to the trial,” returned Miss Mandeville; “look at that thick cloak,” continued she, pointing to a fine grey cloth, lined throughout with pink Persian, and bordered with ermine, which one of the grooms was holding, “and this crimson shawl,” al-

luding to one she held on her arm ; “ and besides these there is my cousin’s blue mantle, lined throughout with sable, in the curricle.”

“ Well,” returned Mr. Fraser, “ as this is a fine July day, and no chance of a shower, I believe you are tolerably well provided.”

“ *Tolerably* well, Mr. Fraser,” repeated Miss Mandeville ; “ why I consider myself fit for a Russian campaign.”

“ I do think *men* are the most inconsistent beings with regard to women’s attire !” said Lady Mandeville to the Countess ; “ sometimes they will make an outcry if you speak of cold, and venture to tie a silk handkerchief about your neck ; at others, regardless of your feelings, persist in muffleing you to the throat.”

“ Now I propose,” said the Count de Meurville, “ that Mr. Fraser sketch the appropriate attire of a lady prepared for a drive in summer.”

“ I second the proposition,” cried Miss Man-

deville, " that I may in future conform more to his taste."

" Oh, I could not do that either," said Mr. Fraser; " I only know I like something substantial."

" Are you going to call any where, Madelina?" asked Lady Mandeville.

" No, it is too late, I believe," returned she; " but if Clifford has no objection, we will drive as far as Mrs. Goddard's to inquire whether she has received the books from London."

" I have no objection to go any where, or do any thing you like," said the Count de Meurville handing Miss Mandeville into the curricle, and then getting in himself.

" How confoundedly well your sister looks in that carriage, Sidney," said Lord Rossmollen; who now came from the house, and sauntered towards them: " I know many a man, and many a great one too," continued his Lordship, pulling up his cravat, and looking

after the curricle, which was now descending through the dark dell of trees, “ who would marry a girl on that account alone, had she no other attraction.”

“ Are you among the number, my Lord,” inquired Mr. Mandeville.

“ Oh, faith I am !” replied the young Earl whistling ; “ whenever I marry, it shall be a girl who will set off my curricle and my coronet, and I will ask nothing more.”

“ That will form your domestic felicity, will it ? You do not require love ?”

“ Love !” repeated the Peer : “ Oh no !—

‘ My wishes, which never were bounded before,
Are here bounded by friendship, and ask for no more.’ ”

As Mrs. Vigers’s carriage now drew up, Sidney led Miss Darcliff towards it ; and in doing so, inquired of her whether she ever rode.

“ Sometimes,” was the reply ; “ the Countess of Malverton and Lady Georgiana do frequently.”

“I am told you and your daughter often ride, Lady Malverton?” said Mr. Mandeville, as he came towards her.

“We do,” replied the Countess; “and perhaps should oftener but for want of gentlemen: it is dull having no companion but the groom.

“That is a deficiency,” returned he, “which we can at all times most easily and happily supply. Whenever you honour us by sending here, you shall have a reinforcement of cavaliers; it is an actual disgrace to the county, for you and your daughter ever to want company.”

“It is not for want of candidates,” said the Countess smiling, as she got into the carriage; “but I am a mother, you know, and obliged to be fastidious.”

“You are the mother of Lady Georgiana Granville, and have good reason to be so,” said he, bowing to her as the carriage drove off.

CHAPTER V.

“ And well do vanished frowns enhance
The charm of every brightened glance ;
And dearer seems each dawning smile,
For having lost its light awhile.”

MOORE.

To return to our fair Georgiana, whom we left in no very amiable frame of mind ; we must acquaint our readers that on leaving the breakfast-parlour, she ran up to a room denominated “ her boudoir,” and throwing herself on a sofa, cried with passion for nearly an hour ; when, through weakness (she being very delicate), her cries subsided into occasional and convulsive sobs ; and they terminated in sleep ;

which, from exhaustion, finally overpowered her. So helpless and yet so haughty, so infantine and yet so high-spirited, was Georgiana. After remaining for about two hours in that sort of lethargic stupor which frequently succeeds violent agitation, she roused herself, and the remembrance of the past appeared like a dream ; but it was one of those dreams from which, unfortunately, she had often awakened, and discovered to be founded on sad reality.

The first object that met the eyes of Georgiana was her breakfast, which had been left in the room, though she was insensible to it, and was not the less welcome for being undeserved. As soon as she had finished her solitary meal, she amused herself in arranging the plants in her green-house, (which opened out of the boudoir,) and in placing some of her fine flowering geraniums on a little veranda which was outside the windows. This veranda overhung a part of the orchard that close adjoined

the road, and Georgiana used to delight in sitting early in the fine summer morning, at one of the windows, to observe the country people, as, laden with the produce of their respective farms and gardens, they passed on their way to the London markets. And, indeed, among the carts filled with fine fruit and vegetables, the girls with eggs and butter, or water-cresses and mushrooms, and ploughmen driving their cattle, there were frequently objects that the glowing pencil of Morland might have transferred to a picture, and that the less magical one of Georgiana delighted to pourtray. But, perhaps, to view the picturesque was not the young lady's sole attraction here, and that the gaze of admiration with which she was beheld by those passing had its influence.

Georgiana's beauty possessed (independent of form and features) a luxuriance and brilliancy that would arrest alike the eye of the painter or the peasant, though the impression

it would make on each might be widely different. As vanity was not, however, at this moment predominant in the bosom of Georgiana, and she was tired of assorting her plants, she left the green-house, and returned to her boudoir ; from one of the windows of which she saw Sophia Darcliff watering the flowers in the garden, and her mother walking with a book in her hand. It looked so pleasant that Georgiana longed to be out likewise ; and one moment was determined to ask forgiveness for her conduct at breakfast, and permission to join them : but the next, pride revived, and she sat down to her harp ; on which she had just commenced, “ Since then I am doomed,” when her mother entered the room through the green-house, which led by a flight of steps from the garden ; her cheeks were paler than usual, and her eyes turned with a sorrowful steadfastness on her daughter. “ Georgiana,” she said, after a few moments’ silence, “ you

can form no idea of the anguish which your passions inflict on me, and I sincerely trust that experience will never enable you to conceive it ; that the time may *not* come, in which *you* will be the mother of a child, whose violent temper, reflecting your own, will retrace to your memory what I once suffered by your's. I know that my indulgence has been very great, but I still encouraged the hope that your amiability would justify it—that your affection would more do so : instead of that, I have the mortification of beholding you at seventeen, (when childhood can no longer be pleaded as an excuse), deficient in many respects in the one, and often totally neglectful of the other. I have frequently warned you against the sad consequence of indulging passion ; I have pointed out the humiliating equality it may place us on with those to whom we consider ourselves vastly superior : for, like *love*, it has been truly said to level all distinctions. I have entreated

your correction of a disposition so baneful ; but warning, advice, entreaty, have all been ineffectual, and your father will have the misery, when he returns to England, of beholding in you, at a more advanced period, the same violence of spirit which gave him so much uneasiness during your childhood. Or if he does not return to witness it, I shall most probably be the unhappy reporter of its continuance ; for I every day expect to receive letters announcing his coming, or expressing his wishes for me to join him. As the latter event is far most probable, and your accompanying me will, I imagine, be out of the case, whatever your sister may do ; I would implore you for your own sake, not to be regardless of the advice which, while you remain with me, I shall consider it my duty to give you whenever necessary. For retracing it in your memory when, separated from me, you can no longer hear it from my lips, will often prevent you from being

misled by the dictates of your own proud heart, or the interested professions of affection and admiration, which your rank and fortune will render you liable to receive. But, perhaps," said the Countess, observing Lady Georgiana looked very unconcerned, " perhaps, you will rejoice when separated from your Mentor. And, far from wishing to perpetuate her precepts by retrospection, will endeavour to drown the remembrance of them in the pleasures of dissipation ; and think little of losing the affection of your mother, provided you have, to atone for it, the admiration of the world."

"Oh, Mamma ! can you imagine so ill of me ?" exclaimed Lady Georgiana, throwing herself into the arms of the Countess ; "Can you suppose I shall ever forget your advice, though I may not always profit by it ; or that the applauses of an assembled world could make me happy—if I had lost your love ?"

“ I am very willing to believe, Georgiana,” said the Countess, “ that at this moment you feel yourself incapable of either, and fancy you ever will be so. But, alas! my child, what security can I have in your affection for me when absent, if even the slightest disappointment of vanity causes you, in my presence, to forget alike affection and duty; and give way to anger the most violent, and disrespect the most unpardonable ?”

Georgiana wept; but could offer nothing in exculpation of her conduct except regret.

“ In proportion as I love you,” continued Lady Malverton, “ must I lament that there should be any shades in your character—that you should not be as superior in temper as you are in every thing else.”

The Countess presently left Lady Georgiana, having to prepare for her drive, and the carriage being already at the door. As soon as Lady Malverton, Mrs. Vigers, Miss Darcliff,

had driven off, and Georgiana could fear no intrusion, she took a volume down from the shelf appropriated as a receptacle for books of a lighter kind, and threw herself on a sultana to read; with the hope of forgetting in an imaginary world, the gloomy prospects she at that moment formed of the real; but the tale on which Georgiana opened, though beautiful was not altogether calculated to dispel her melancholy,—it was one of Mrs. Opie's, entitled, “The Ruffian Boy,” in which a lady is supposed incessantly haunted by a lover whom she once refused, and whose “bright and terrible eyes,” glaring on her sometimes in the darkness of night, and sometimes in the noon-day, nearly cause her derangement. In this tale Georgiana had proceeded some way, when she was startled by a voice behind her, repeating from it, “*Je te retrouve enfin:*” and on looking up, the mirror opposite to her reflected the form of the

speaker behind her, who was Miss McDougal, the intimate friend of her Ladyship, whose vivacity of manner and conversation rendered her at all times an antidote to melancholy.

“ How are you, dearest Juliet ? ” cried Georgiana, springing up ; “ it is an age since I have seen you ! ”

“ And pray whose fault is that ? ” though not expressed, was implied in the intelligent eyes of Miss McDougal, as she seated herself and threw back her chip-hat, which was encircled with wild roses. “ I have called so often,” said she, “ and been told that you were out, that I began to suspect the information false ; and to satisfy myself as to its truth, to-day I ran up-stairs without asking the old porter any questions, and he, knowing me well, did not arrest my progress. I looked into the sitting rooms, but all were empty ; and I was going to return in despair, when

this sanctum-sanctorum occurred to me ; into which I glided, the door being partly open, without being perceived by you."

"I am sorry, dearest Juliet," said Georgiana, "that you should think I am ever denied to you but when I am really out; for, I assure you, there is no one it gives me more pleasure to see than yourself. And even when I am out," added her Ladyship, "you need not run away; for there is always some of the family at home, and any part would be delighted to see you."

"Excuse my candour, Georgiana," returned Miss McDougal; "but you are the only person I ever care to see. Your mother is so very superior, and so very penetrating, that I sink beneath her glance; then Mrs. Vigers, so respectable, so venerable. Such a mad-cap as I, am no companion for her!—and poor Sophia, though she is very good, and very amiable, and

all that, does look so grave when I am rattling away."

" You have forgotten your friend Miss Staples," observed Georgiana, with an indescribable mixture of archness and gravity.

" Oh, Miss Crabtree !" said Juliet, laughing, " I had indeed forgotten that most agreeable appendage to the house, whose introduction into it will for ever remain an enigma to me."

" How do you know that she is not a relation of ours ?" asked Lady Georgiana, smiling.

" If I were not certain that she is not," replied Miss McDougal, " I should scarcely, with all my thoughtlessness, speak so saucily of her as I generally do. It would be difficult, indeed, to persuade any one," continued she, " that a sour-faced, ugly personage like her, was related to Mr. and Mrs. Vigers, who are always so cheerful and good-natured ; to your

mother, so elegant and interesting ; but, above all, to yourself, so charming !”

“ I must tell Miss Staples how complimentary you are to her when she returns to-morrow,” said Lady Georgiana.

“ Oh, I believe it would be impossible,” cried Miss McDougal, “ by any additional sins, for me to be lower down in her good books than I am ; but really, Georgiana, it is a matter of amazement to me how you, who are not deficient in spirit, can have patience with her affectation and folly.”

“ It often does amuse me,” returned Lady Georgiana.

“ Oh, it is so ridiculous,” continued Juliet, “ to observe her when she follows you all into church on Sunday, bridling her crany neck, and trying to look so amiable ; while you, Georgiana, without any endeavours at all, look so beautiful and so innocent, that the men follow

you with their eyes, and the women pull down their veils to conceal their envy."

"I should be sorry, for the credit of my sex," said Lady Georgiana, with the air of one who really was, or affected to be, unconscious of her charms, "if I really thought their envy was so easily excited. *You, Juliet*, draw flattering pictures of those you love."

"If I were in your place," exclaimed Miss McDougal, "I should tease Miss Crabtree most unmercifully: I would ink her caps, notch her ribbons, crinkle her frills, cut off the tops of her gloves, put cups and saucers in her bed, detonating balls in her shoes, and set all the young men quizzing her; in short, treat her as I used an old aunt of mine, who was a very similar piece of goods, and at whose expense I had many a laugh. But a truce to these hags, who are excellent Marplots in a romance, but terrible bores and dead weights in real life.

You must know, that since I have seen you, Georgiana, I have had an adventure—a romantic rencontre—I have seen such a man! To which of my favourite heroes shall I compare him?" continued this lively lady, as springing up on a stool which was before a book-case she ran her eye over some novels: "he is as interesting as Glenmurray, as charming as Valancourt, as lovely as Lord Mortimer!—

' Around his brow such martial graces shine,
So tall, so awful, and almost divine.' "

" I know whom you mean," cried Lady Georgiana; " it is the Count de Meurville, who is stopping at the Hermitage. When did you see him?"

" It was a day or two ago," replied Miss McDougal, " when I went to the cottage, which you admired so much the evening we were last walking together, and of which you took a sketch, with the old woman spin-

ning before the door, the bird-cage, and little garden. It was there I met the Count de Meurville, and what brought him there you look a little puzzled to guess?"

"I am, indeed," said her Ladyship.

"Well, you must first hear what took me there," cried Miss McDougal. "In that cottage lives, you know, the little black-eyed boy, whom you could not prevail on to sit for his picture, who is grandson to the old woman, and has the high and mighty honour of being my godson: on which latter account I feel myself in duty bound occasionally to visit him. And during my last visitation, there came on such a shower of rain, that I was obliged to stay longer than I intended, when it occurred to me that I could do nothing better than give little George a lesson. Therefore, collecting all my patience, with a book in one hand, and holding the little fellow by the other, I sat down to teach A B C. Either

he was particularly bright, or I particularly good-humoured, for we got on famously, which, by the bye, is not always the case; when our studies were interrupted by the appearance of a gentleman, who I afterwards learnt was the Count de Meurville. From the moment of his entrance, the eyes of little George began to wander, and those of the Count, who begged the old woman to allow him to remain in the cottage during the shower, were rivetted on me. By degrees, I know not how, we got into conversation; perhaps he thought I was the mother of the boy, and that praising him was the surest way to my favour, for he certainly was most lavish in his admiration. The child, as children usually are, I think, when taken notice of, was so bashful there was no getting him to speak; he looked up with tears in his eyes at me; 'What is the matter, George,' said I, 'what makes you look so unhappy?'

‘Unhappy!’ repeated the Count de Meurville, ‘how is that possible when he is looking at you?’ ‘I wish,’ said I, laughing, ‘that looking at me were an antidote, or even an anodyne to sorrow.’ I forget what the Count de Meurville said exactly; but I believe it was something more complimentary than I should choose to repeat. We talked for some time longer, and when the shower was over, and I was preparing to run home alone, notwithstanding the entreaties of the Count to be allowed to accompany me, my brother came for me.”

“Upon my word, this was a very pretty adventure,” said Lady Georgiana; “and I dare say the Count de Meurville’s thoughts often wander from the elegances and beauty which surround him at Hermitage, to the charms which arrested his eyes in the cottage of Dame Allan.”

“I very much suspect,” returned Miss McDougal laughing, “that the Count de

Meurville's thoughts are not so easily captivated."

"It might be very difficult to captivate them," observed her Ladyship, "and yet you might have done so."

"If he were any where but at the Hermitage," said Miss McDougal, "I might be more likely to indulge so presumptuous an idea; but Lady Mandeville almost possesses the art of concentrating the thoughts of the object she deems worthy of her spells. She throws around him such golden and yet entangling nets, and keeps up such a constant succession of pleasures and excitements, with luxury and refinement so anodysing, as to make the Hermitage appear a heaven, of which her daughters are the angels."

"The possession of one of which angels," said Lady Georgiana, with a dubious smile, "is to communicate an eternal elysium to the happy man who makes her his choice."

“ Talking of the angels,” returned Miss McDougal, “ 'tis said Lord Clavers is dying for Miss Mandeville ; and that it is considering him his son elect makes Sir William so anxious he should be returned for the county.”

“ I very much doubt,” replied Lady Georgiana, “ whether the elegant and interesting Lord Clavers, the future Earl of Camelford, need despair of obtaining Miss Mandeville, if she be the object of his affections.”

“ Report also says,” observed Miss McDougal, “ that Mrs. Damer, who was married lately, you know, at the Hermitage, leads the most wretched, mortifying life that can possibly be. She has, poor thing ! seen very little of the world, and being suddenly transplanted among those who have mixed in it so much, is awkward beyond expression.”

“ She must be a complete foil to her elegant cousins,” observed Lady Georgiana.

“ Exactly so,” returned Miss McDougal ;

“ Charles Damer, in a fit of folly or fondness, has married a woman who serves for little else. She was living with her father, a plain country gentleman in Kent, when Mr. Damer, who has a hunting lodge somewhere near there, saw her ; was struck with her having a pretty face, and transplanted her from rusticity, where she was happy, to refinement, where she is miserable ; and where she shows off to great advantage the superior breeding of those with whom she is surrounded, and who well know how to avail themselves of the contrast. The Miss Mandevilles,” continued Miss McDougall, “ are frequently downright rude to her ; and Lady Mandeville, with all her affected *suave*, gives cuts and inuendoes that make the poor thing colour up to her eyes every minute.”

“ I believe, if the truth were known,” said Lady Georgiana, “ that Lady Mandeville is scarcely more indignant at the poorness of the

connexion Mr. Damer formed, than at his having ventured to form any at all, unless it had been with one of his cousins."

"I do not doubt," replied Miss McDougal, "that she thought he ought to have waited, and seen whether he was wanting as a *dernier resort* for her Madelina, or Charlotte, or one of them ; and unable to attack him for disappointing her expectations, she makes his wife suffer in a thousand ways for having been his choice."

"I almost wonder," observed Lady Georgiana, "that her husband will allow her to remain where she is subjected to such mortifications."

"The miseries she endures, though bitter, are of too minor a nature," observed Miss McDougal, "for a man to enter into ; or for a woman, particularly a bride, to complain of without incurring the imputation of discontent and ill-humour : besides, Mr. Damer is out for the most part all the morning ; and in the even-

ing, when there is a general aspect of cheerfulness and good-humour, men are seldom inclined to investigate the cause or regard any shade of latent discontent that may cloud the countenance of a wife. But to give you a specimen of Miss Mandeville's good-natured way, I will tell you a circumstance, which, though trifling, fully evinces it, and which occurred when I was stopping at the Hermitage about a week ago. It happened that some of the company, principally the younger part, were assembled rather earlier than usual in the drawing-room, after dressing for dinner; amongst others, Mrs. Damer, Miss Mandeville, and myself; when, for want of something better, the subject of discussion was the pretensions to beauty which a lady who had called in the morning, and with whom we were to drink tea in the evening, possessed. Every body gave their respective opinion: one, that she was pretty; another, that she was passable; myself, that she was

interesting ; Mrs. Damer, that she was beautiful. Upon which latter encomium being expressed, Miss Mandeville, assuming a look of forgetfulness, suddenly exclaimed, ‘ Who was it that was saying to me this morning they thought her very plain ? Who could it be ? ’ she continued, putting her finger gracefully to her forehead, as if to recall her recollection, which very conveniently returning, she cried, with an air of affected surprise, ‘ I declare it was Caroline ! ’ and fixed her own eyes, as well as attracted those of the company, on Mrs. Damer ; whose face, arms, and neck, became scarlet.”

“ Unfortunate Caroline ! ” said Lady Georgiana.

“ You should say ‘ poor Caroline ! ’ ” returned Julia ; “ as Miss Mandeville does on every occasion.”

“ But it certainly was very wrong in Mrs. Damer,” observed Lady Georgiana, “ to express

such different opinions on the same subject, within so short a time; however trifling the matter in question was."

"Certainly!" replied Miss M^cDougall: "but she afterwards told me, that remembrance of a piece of advice Miss Mandeville had once given her, flashing across her mind at the moment, determined her on expressing a different opinion from what she had done before."

"I suppose the advice," said Lady Georgiana, "was always to incline to the side of admiration when a lady's beauty was the topic of conversation before gentlemen; as not doing so, is generally attributed by them to envy."

"Exactly so," returned Miss M^cDougal, "and Mrs. Damer had reason to repent following her friend's advice, for Miss Mandeville, not content with her first exclamation, continued, though she saw her cousin was ready to sink into the earth with confusion; 'Indeed, Caroline, any lady may think herself most

happy, whom you condescend to admire, for you are the most severe creature I ever knew.' Mrs. Damer appeared really overcome by shame, which was increased when a gentleman, with the good-natured hope of relieving it, asked Miss Mandeville, 'whether she was privileged to condemn criticism in others, by never indulging in it herself.' 'Without vanity I may say I am,' replied Miss Mandeville, 'as mere policy would prevent it.' Of course every one was anxious," continued Miss M'Dougal, "to know what political motives could induce the fair Madelina to such forbearance. In explanation of which she observed, that to be severe on others, would draw down criticism on herself, which she had no pretension to stand, 'But Caroline,' she added, looking at Mrs. Damer, 'need not fear animadversion: she has beauty that would stand its test.' Now this compliment to her cousin

was made with all the appearance of good-nature, and it evidently astonished Mr. Damer, who entered in time to overhear it, that his wife should appear discontented and ready to cry; but I, who knew Miss Mandeville well enough to know that her speech was made for the company to contrast the elegant manners and appearance of herself, who never criticised, and the clumsy, awkward one of Mrs. Damer who presumed to do so, was not the least surprised that the latter should be annoyed rather than complimented."

"That is so exactly Miss Mandeville," said Lady Georgiana, when Miss McDougal concluded; "and so exactly like what her sister Mrs. Balfour was,—delighting to make others appear to disadvantage, and yet assuming a manner so plausible that you had no redress. I recollect well," continued her Ladyship, "though it is now years ago, the tone of

bitterness, and yet assumed softness, in which Miss Mandeville observed to me, that it was fortunate her campaign was commencing before mine, or she supposed there would be no hearts left to conquer."

"Had she commenced with conquering her own heart," observed Miss McDougal, "she would probably ere this have made a lasting conquest of some other. But while I am talking and philosophizing at such a rate," said this young lady, with a sigh that was strangely contrasted to her late sprightly tones, "I am the most wretched of human creatures!"

"You wretched, my Juliet!" cried Lady Georgiana: "I hope you only fancy so."

"It is something more than fancy," returned Miss McDougal. "At present, indeed, my unhappiness is but anticipatory, and I do not allow my spirits to be cast down: but I fear it will soon become actual; for," continued she, as

her bright eyes glistened in tears, “my guardians insist on my forming a marriage, which my soul detests !”

“ I should not have thought,” said Lady Georgiana, “ that such apparently easy, good-natured people as Mr. and Mrs. Brocklesby, ever insisted on your doing any thing that you did not like.”

“ It certainly is not so much they who do,” replied Miss McDougal, “ as Mr. Risport, another of my guardians, who resides in London, and whom they wrote to, informing him of the excellent offer, so they designated it, which had been made me by a Mr. Cawdor. This intelligence, and that of my opposition to accepting the proposals, brought, as I feared and expected, good Mr. Risport down ; who, on the evening after his arrival, summoned me to walk with him in the garden : and thither we proceeded, I knowing well what I was to expect, though he did not immediately

come to the point, but talked of the beauty of the flowers, the fineness of the fruit, the clearness of the sky. When these subjects, however, were exhausted, I trembled. He cleared his throat ; and, pulling himself more erect than usual, began, with a look as grave and voice as pompous as good Mr. Winters when giving out his text on Sunday, to congratulate me on the advantageous connexion I was about to form. Perceiving a dead silence on my part, the man asked me, (affecting not to know,) whether the proposals were not perfectly agreeable to me.

“ ‘ They are perfectly disagreeable,’ returned I.

“ ‘ Miss M‘Dougal,’ said he, with a most petrifying frown ; ‘ I am at a loss to understand you.’

“ ‘ And yet, ‘tis very easy, Sir,’ said I ; ‘ I do not like Mr. Cawdor ; I could never love him.’

“‘ Love !’ repeated the old bachelor, with a most contemptuous curl of his lip ; ‘ pray who thinks of love now-a-days ?’

“‘ I never intend to marry, without thinking of it,’ coldly replied I.

“‘ Romantic stuff ! ridiculous nonsense !’ he audibly articulated ; and a silence ensued, which was broken by his demanding, whether I had any other objections to Mr. Cawdor but that of not being able to love him ?

“‘ Have you any thing to urge in his favour, except the number of his acres ?’ inquired I, with the most provoking *sang-froid*.

“‘ There is every thing to urge in his favour,’ replied the gentleman haughtily ; ‘ and I shall esteem myself happy, Miss M^cDougal, as holding the responsible situation of your guardian, if you never throw yourself away but upon one half as deserving. Mr. Cawdor is,’ concluded my guardian emphatically, ‘ an honest man.’

“‘ An honest man !’ repeated I, in a dis-

appointed tone ; (for I assure you, Georgiana, it made my blood run cold, to think of that being the only encomium merited by my future husband,) I never suspected him of being the contrary, Sir.'

" ' And he is a good young man,' added Mr. Risport ; not taking notice, I believe, of my reply to his former eulogium.

" ' You are unfortunate in your epithets of praise,' observed I : ' a good young man always conveys to me the idea of a stupid dolt.'

" ' It conveys then to you, Miss, a different idea, from what is conveys to every one else,' was the reply.

" ' Perhaps it does,' said I.

" ' You have not yet given me,' he continued, ' one sensible reason for your rejection of Mr. Cawdor ; and, I verily believe, you have not one to give.'

" ' Oh, indeed ! I have very good reasons,'

said I ;' determined to provoke him for his impertinence in forming such a supposition ; by putting on the silliest look and voice imaginable.

“ ‘ And what are they, Miss ? ’ demanded he.

“ ‘ I have several objections,’ returned I. ‘ In the first place, he has so much the cut of a squire, and seems as if he understood nothing but about the improvement of cattle and crops and land ; and I should hate to be the Squire’s lady, and hear people call me Lady Bountiful, if I were condescending and charitable : if not, in audible whispers, have my appearance announced, Here comes Madam ; or That ’s the Squire and Madam ;—

‘ Perhaps see the whispering fools inquire,
Why pouts my Lady ? ’ or ‘ Why frowns the Squire ? ’

But what I think worse of than all,’ added I, pulling a rose-bud to pieces ; ‘ is his having red hair ; I do so hate red hair.’ My respected guardian had kept his temper with

difficulty during the former part of my speech, but this postscript to it about the red-hair, seemed the signal for doing so no longer. He told me I talked ‘like a child, like a woman,’ two things he considered synonymous; that I was ‘a silly romantic girl, who had read novels till I expected to find every man a hero, and every hero a lover:’ in short, he intimated that I was a fool, though he did not dare actually to call me one, knowing that would raise the spirit of McDougal a little too high in the bosom of your Juliet. But he did tell me, that if I refused to listen to his advice in this instance, it was the last time he should ever offer it, the last time I should receive counsel from one who had been deputed to give it, while acceptable, by my dying father. This was an appeal too sacred to be treated with levity even by *me*: ‘Sir,’ said I, ‘you shall do with me what you choose.’ Upon which he held out his hand to me,

told me I acted like myself, and worthy of the father whose memory I so much venerated ; in short, said a thousand things that he would have as soon cut off his head as said a moment before. But notwithstanding all his compliments, I assure you, Georgiana, I repented the moment after I had made that speech of mine : it certainly was an extremely magnanimous, but I began to think an extremely rash one."

" Well ! I must say, Juliet," observed Lady Georgiana, " that if you had no stronger objections to Mr. Cawdor than those you mentioned to your guardian, I do not think them sufficiently cogent to justify a refusal of him."

" Oh, I did not mention my principal objection to him," replied Miss McDougal ; " because I knew it would be touching on a tender point : it is that of being a middle-aged man ; the period of life of all others at which men are most disagreeable and stubborn. Incapable of entering into the warm feelings of youth, and not at-

tained to the dignity of age, they affect to forget the former, and are angry when thought approaching the latter."

"I must differ in opinion with you," said Lady Georgiana; "it is a time of life which, if I were selecting a husband, I should prefer him to be at: it is a period at which he would be best calculated to be what I have often heard you say would be the summit of your ambition—a guide, philosopher, and friend."

"Oh, if Mr. Cawdor were capable of being that," involuntary exclaimed Juliet, the idea pleasing her romantic mind; "but he is such a boor, such a Goth; he cannot even say anything new in paying his addresses, but makes the hackneyed declaration that the happiness of his future life depends on me."

"What can man say more?" asked Lady Georgiana smiling.

"My dear, dear Georgiana, can you ask such a question! Why he should tell me that

he could not live without me, that unless blessed with my possession life would become an insupportable burden to him, and the world appear but as a wilderness ! that he thought of nothing, lived for nothing, loved nothing on earth in comparison with myself ! ”

Lady Georgiana laughed, and repeated

“ Let Cawdor travel, rest, stand still, or walk,
Still he should nothing but of Juliet talk ;
Ev’n write to his father, ending with this line,
I am, my heavenly Juliet, ever thine.”

Just as her Ladyship repeated these lines, a carriage stopped at the door, which both she and Miss McDougal recognized to be Mrs. Torrens’s.

“ Am I fit to be seen ? ” was the exclamation of Lady Georgiana, as she ran over to a mirror and surveyed her dress, which consisted of a muslin wrapper interspersed with work and lace.

“ Fit to be seen ! my dear Georgiana,”

said Miss McDougal, "you are never otherwise."

"Well, then, we will descend and give these people audience," returned her Ladyship, twisting her watch-chain more intricately in her muslin sash.

"*Allons!*" cried Miss McDougal, and the two young ladies descended.

The visitors consisted of Mrs. Torrens and her two daughters: the former was correct, genteel, but stupid; the latter were fashionable in dress and appearance, but very silent.

After conversing on various trifling topics, Mrs. Torrens expressed as much anxiety as she thought it ladylike to express on any subject, to see some dessert plates which Lady Georgiana had lately painted, and she had heard spoken of as beautiful.

"Oh! I should like to see them, of all things," said each of the young ladies, breaking silence for the first time.

“ I wish they were more worthy of your inspection,” observed Lady Georgiana, as she left the room to fetch them.

“ I think Lady Georgiana looks more lovely every time I see her, Miss McDougal,” said Mrs. Torrens, fixing her eyes on Juliet, with whom she was previously acquainted; “ and so graceful, and so dignified,” she added: “ I cannot conceive, for my part, how the Countess of Malverton has inculcated such ease of manner in one so young.”

“ Lady Georgiana’s are native graces,” returned Miss McDougal, looking at the Misses Torrens.

“ Lady Malverton must be a very happy mother,” observed Mrs. Torrens, with a sigh, which seemed to intimate that she herself was not; and a silence ensued, broken only by the re-appearance of Lady Georgiana with the painted china.

“ How charmingly done!” exclaimed Mrs.

Torrens, as she carefully took one of the plates.

“ How beautiful !” exclaimed the young ladies, following her example.

“ I wish, Cecilia,” said Mrs. Torrens to her eldest daughter, “ that you could paint like this.”

“ You know I never tried painting on china, Mamma,” replied Miss Torrens, looking reproachfully at her mother.

“ Well, I mean I wish you would try,” said the latter, in a pacific tone; and turning to Lady Georgiana, she continued, “ I suppose your Ladyship painted these in the biscuit.”

“ Yes,” replied Lady Georgiana, who was standing by, with the wandering eye and vacant smile of one to whom praise had ceased to be a novelty.

“ They are very like the plates that Lady Olivia Oranmore painted last winter,” whispered the youngest Miss Torrens to her sister.

“Not at all,” replied Cecilia; “her’s was a glass, and a flower on each, whereas these are china, with fruit represented.”

“Well, I mean they have something the same effect,” muttered Miss Helen.

“They are perfectly different,” persisted Cecilia.

“I suppose you have had a great deal of instruction in drawing, Lady Georgiana,” said Mrs. Torrens.

“I frequently go up to town,” returned her Ladyship, “and generally take a few lessons when there.”

“You profit by them, indeed,” observed Mrs. Torrens, as she rang the bell to order her carriage to the door.

“My mother draws extremely well,” said Lady Georgiana, “so that I am never at a loss for an instructor, even in the country.”

After a little more conversation of a desultory kind, Mrs. Torrens and her daughters took

leave ; the latter more than ever disliking and envying Lady Georgiana, who, during the whole of the visit, had appeared superior indeed.

They had seen her but once before, and then not near enough to judge of her person and manners, which close inspection proved to be as perfect as fame had represented.

As soon as the visitors had gone, Lady Georgiana insisted on Miss McDougal's going with her to the garden, which after some little hesitation she consented to.

The young ladies when there amused themselves in pulling fruit and flowers, and were preparing to return in, after a short time, when, through a door near them, which opened from the plantations, came Mr. Vigers and Mr. Granville : the former was the respectable owner of Abbeyvalley, who had been in London for some weeks past, and whose arrival had been daily expected ; the latter, a brother of the Earl of Malverton, and consequently uncle of Lady

Georgiana. The two gentlemen had arrived by the coach about half an hour before, and walked up from the town where it stopped.

Lady Georgiana expressed the greatest delight at seeing them, and asked a hundred questions as she hung attentively about her grandfather and uncle, while Miss McDougal, unrelated to either, participated from long acquaintance with each in the pleasure felt by her friend.

They now all returned to the house, and found the party who had been visiting were come back ; it was indeed past five o'clock, and Miss McDougal, who was in vain pressed to stay for dinner, returned home.

CHAPTER VI.

“ All other faults may take a higher aim,
But hopeless envy must be still the same ;
Some other passions may be turn’d to good,
But envy must subdue or be subdued.”

THE lady whom Miss McDougal so unce-
remoniously denominated Miss Crabtree, but
whose real name was Staples, we have not,
from her having been on a visit since our nar-
rative commences, regularly introduced yet to our
readers ; but as she returned early in the morn-
ing on which our chapter opens, it may not be
improper here to present her to notice. Miss
Staples was arrived at that period in a lady’s
life, at which, when she arrives unmarried, she

is usually denominated an old maid: she had been originally introduced into the house as a sort of companion to Mrs. Vigers, who, after the marriage of her three daughters, felt herself somewhat lonely from the want of a female companion; and though for these last two years the Countess of Malverton and Lady Georgiana Granville had resided at the Abbey, and even before that period Miss Darcliff, an orphan girl, whom Mrs. Vigers had undertaken to provide for, yet she did not like to dismiss one who for a long time had contributed to her comfort. Enjoying a situation whose duties once consisted in writing for or reading to Mrs. Vigers, but which had since Miss Darcliff's arrival become a mere sinecure, those duties being transferred to her, Miss Staples trifled away her time in a monotonous series of walking, visiting, going to small parties, making and new modelling her dresses, reading novels, and returning them to the library. Aiming

to be what nature had never intended her, and sighing for advantages which fortune had denied her, she added to frivolity of mind a discontent of every thing connected with herself, and envy of the blessings of others. Possessing a disposition so unfortunate, Miss Staples had constant sources of irritation, though practised command of features generally prevented its being discernible in her countenance. Few, however, were such objects of secret envy and dislike to her as Lady Malverton and her daughter; she had always dreaded the idea of the Countess coming to reside at the Abbey, fearing her Ladyship's keenness would penetrate the veil of affected humility and placidity which she always wore, and expose to the eyes of Mrs. Vigers the malice and selfishness it concealed. In these anticipations she was not wholly mistaken; the Countess fully saw, and made Miss Staples aware that she saw, the paltry materials which composed her character,

though, considering it worthy nothing more than pity, she did not express her opinion on the subject to Mrs. Vigers ; who she knew felt partiality for Miss Staples from long custom of having her about her, and pity from knowing she was born to a higher station than that circumstances had obliged her family to accept of for her. Towards Georgiana the dislike of Miss Staples might have had some excuse, had it been only excited by the many unamiable qualities of that young lady, who, besides indulging in passions such as we have described, could at times assume all the haughtiness and insolence we frequently see in high-born caressed beauty ; but it proceeded from a withering envy, that caused her to detest the sight of a creature enjoying so many advantages, to sicken at the sight of a planet obscured by whose dazzling light she lived.

But as illustration is as much better than description, as example than precept, we shall,

without further delineation of character, introduce our readers into the drawing-room at the Abbey, where on the morning after that we have described in our last chapter, were assembled the Countess of Malverton, Lady Georgiana Granville, Miss Darcliff, and Miss Staples. The Countess, seated near a window, was finishing a bonnet she had begun some days before. Her daughter was painting a landscape, Miss Darcliff working, and Miss Staples, who had arrived very early that morning, was cutting out patterns at a large table covered with work and insertion.

“ We must not forget,” observed Lady Malverton, glancing at a note on the chimney-piece, “ to send that invitation to Hermitage.”

“ How long have the Mandevilles been in the country ?” asked Miss Staples ; “ have you seen them yet ?”

“ About a fortnight,” replied the Countess ;

“ we called on them yesterday, and stayed for a long time.”

“ I suppose there is no speaking to them now,” said Miss Staples, affecting to laugh ; “ they are so grand after their residence abroad.”

“ Indeed,” returned Lady Malverton, who delighted to provoke Miss Staples ; “ I think they are much as they always were : to them, accustomed to enjoy every luxury which England can produce, and to mix in the first society it affords, going abroad could have been no such transporting circumstance. Indeed, I believe it was from motives of economy, rather than pleasure, they went.”

“ One of the daughters is a perfect beauty, is she not ?” asked Miss Staples ; “ the one who was not at home till lately.”

“ Do you mean Agnes ?” inquired Miss Darcliff.

“ Oh ! she may be Agnes, or Anastasia, or

Amabel, or anything else out of the way, for they have such a parcel of fine ridiculous names among them," replied Miss Staples with a sneer; "but I believe indeed, it was Agnes, for I recollect hearing people say, they supposed Lady Mandeville intended her for a nun."

"She would make a very pretty nun," observed the Countess; in a tone that rendered it dubious in which sense her expression was to be taken.

"She is very pretty, then?" said Miss Staples.

"Yes, very," returned the Countess. "Like Miss Mandeville and Mrs. Balfour."

"I am sure," said Miss Staples, "I hope, for her own sake, that she is like her sisters in nothing but person; for I think they are two of the most disagreeable young women I ever met in my life."

"I do not know what Mrs. Balfour might have been," observed the Countess, "for I

never saw much of her ; but I think Miss Mandeville's manners are much to be admired."

" Tastes differ," remarked Miss Staples, knowingly ; " but for my part I hate that excess of helplessness and refinement, which Miss Mandeville affects."

" It is at least a feminine affectation," observed the Countess ; " and I can forgive it sooner than the independent carelessness of Charlotte, or the indifferent bluntness of Arabella."

" Oh ! if you go to Miss Arabella Mandeville," cried Miss Staples, with a sneer, " any one would gain by comparison with her."

" I do not mean to say," continued the Countess, regardless of Miss Staples' observation, " that I believe Miss Mandeville to possess the extreme refinement of mind which she does of manner, for I have seen those dulcet tones and downcast looks played off at the time when she was exhibiting her figure in attitudes,

either by waltzing or at the harp, which no really delicate girl could have done."

" Well!" said Miss Staples, " give me realities ; I hate affectation : and I am sure where I was stopping I saw little of it, and yet there were as nice girls at Nutbury as Hermitage can boast."

" Indeed," said the Countess drily.

" Yes, indeed," continued Miss Staples, suspending her cutting out for a minute or two, " six charming girls, I assure you. There was Maria, the eldest, who they said was the mother's favourite : and such a housekeeper as she was ! not a bit of trouble had Mrs. Letton herself, Maria did every thing. I am sure I used to joke her, and say she made a fine lady of Reece, the real housekeeper ; for they kept one, to be sure. Then there was Fanny, she was the beauty ! but not such a beauty as one of the Miss Mandevilles, no airs about her, nothing of the fine lady ; but just as humble as if she were plain.

Then Susan, Sukey as they used to call her for brevity, she was clever at her needle, as good as a mantua-maker; 'twas she gave me these patterns. Then Lucy——”

“ Had *her* name any abbreviation?” interrupted Lady Georgiana, with a slight elevation of the eyebrows.

“ Oh, no! it was short enough. And a fine, good-humoured girl she was. But they were all pleasant girls,” concluded Miss Staples, with a sort of sigh; “ I am sure I was very sorry to part with them;—and their brother (they had but one,) was a genteel, well-behaved young man; not one who would look at a lady standing while he was sitting, or stare at her through his glass, or make impertinent remarks on her dress, (as I have seen many a young man do,) but an obliging, agreeable, young gentleman, who made himself useful to the ladies every way he could, and never obtruded himself on any one.”

“ Was he a schoolboy ?” innocently asked Lady Georgiana.

“ Nothing like it,” returned Miss Staples, a little nettled. “ A finished young man. But here,” added she, sweeping some litter from the table, “ comes a carriage. Whose can it be ?”

“ Whose can it be ?” repeated the Countess, looking out of the window.

“ It is the Boswells’,” said Lady Georgiana ; “ Mr. and Mrs. Boswell.”

“ So it is,” said Lady Malverton, as she replied to the servant’s interrogation of, “ Whether they would be at home ?” in the affirmative. “ I forgot the Boswells had to call,” continued her Ladyship ; when a deafening knock at the door announced their arrival. And in a few moments, Mr. and Mrs. Boswell were ushered into the room : the latter, fashionably but not showily dressed, was in person slight, rather *under* than above the middle size, with

eyes so bright that they must be the first things to attract attention, and feet so beautifully small that they could not be the last.

The ill-natured part of the town of —— had long ago pronounced Mrs. Boswell high in manner, and spirited in temper; because, though young and pretty, she went out but little when in the country, and was extremely particular with regard to her children and servants. Whether there was any better foundation for their opinion of her temper and manner than these circumstances, we do not know; but leave our readers to draw their conclusions from her conversation.

Mrs. Boswell commenced, by regretting she had not been at home the day they called,— saying, “ that Mr. Boswell had insisted on her going out riding that morning; she had confined herself so much since they came from town, and had been so busy unpacking and arranging.

The Countess of Malverton, experienced on the subject, entered feelingly into all the miseries of a recent arrival, and recommended *patience* as the only resource.

“ Unfortunately,” said Mrs. Boswell, laughing, “ it is the commodity in the world of which I possess the least share. Now, he,” said she, looking at her husband, “ has an unusual stock ; not all the stupid blundering of the people about us can discompose him, while it makes me nearly mad.”

“ Why, I think,” said Mr. Boswell, smiling, and with the air of one who did not always venture to say exactly what he thought—“ I think, getting into a passion does not do much good.”

“ Much good !” repeated his wife ; “ why, it does this much good ; that it puts every one on the *qui vive* to obey you : does not it, Lady Malverton ?” said she, with an appealing glance.

“ Oh, it is very necessary, now and then,” returned the Countess ; “ some people cannot be wrought upon by gentler means.”

“ I hate your easy-going, quiet sort of people,” observed Mrs. Boswell, looking at a book which was lying on the table.

“ Have you seen that work, Mrs. Boswell?” inquired Lady Malverton ; “ it is quite a new one.”

“ So I perceive,” returned the lady. “ No, I have not read it, but I have heard of it ; it is reckoned well written, is it not ?” said she, raising her eyes.

“ Very I believe,” said the Countess, “ and as far as I have gone I like it extremely.”

“ You are fond of reading, Mrs. Boswell,” observed Lady Georgiana, “ if I recollect right.”

“ Oh, amazingly !” returned she, “ I could amuse myself with it from morning till night.”

“ We *must* get our library to rights, Diana,”

said her husband, who had strolled over to a book-case at the other end of the room.

“ I hope you will give me full credit, Mr. Boswell,” cried she, “ for having kept it in your memory; I am sure I have done little but bore you about it ever since we came to Sea-Park.”

“ Oh! I will do you the justice Di, to say it is not your fault,” returned he with a significant shake of his head. “ I see, Lady Malverton, you have got my egotistical namesake here,” he added, opening a volume of Boswell’s Johnson.

“ Did you ever know a collection of books where that was not ?” said Mrs. Boswell.

“ Yes, indeed,” returned he, “ and our own at the head of the list.”

“ Our own!” said she; “ why we have got it: only the fact is, you do not go into the library once in six months, and therefore cannot tell what we have got.”

“ It is a very favourite work of mine,” observed Lady Malverton; “ I think it is impossible to read the life of Dr. Johnson without loving Mr. Boswell.”

“ It is extremely entertaining,” said she; “ one can always read it with new pleasure. And his Tour to the Hebrides! Boswell’s Tour to the Hebrides is also delightful. But it is growing late, you must allow me to ring for the carriage. We have to go on to Hermitage this morning; I have not paid my respects there yet. You have, I presume.”

“ Yes, we were there yesterday,” replied the Countess.

“ They are all at home, are they not?” said Mrs. Boswell.

“ I think so,” returned her Ladyship. “ All except Mrs. Balfour, and she is expected down soon on a visit.”

“ Well, I must make the best of my way there now,” said Mrs. Boswell, as her carriage

was announced. “Mr. Boswell, you seem to have a design on those books ; will you be so kind as to wish them good morning and attend me ?”

“I beg a thousand pardons,” cried he, “I was so absorbed in the history of Jane of Navarre—”

“And forgot your own Diana,” said she ; as once more bidding them adieu, and begging her compliments might be presented to Mr. Vigers, she descended the stairs.

The dinner party at the Abbey was enlarged to-day by the addition of a young man of the name of Douglas ; who had been expected for some time past, and whose coming had been frequently postponed. He seemed calculated to stand as a prototype of the whole race of young men, whose more agreeable opposites Miss Staples had sketched in the morning ; and was therefore beheld with as evil an eye by her, as she, in spite of the showy ribbon she had mounted in her cap, was indifferently regarded by him.

Heir to a fine fortune, possessed of a fine person, and nephew to the Marquess of Glen-allan, Henry Douglas affected (at five-and-twenty) the independence of a man of fortune, and the ease of a man of fashion ; but not having yet attained to the apathy of a man of the world, he could not behold, without evident wonder and admiration, the beauty of Lady Georgiana Granville, which seemed to him to exceed every thing he had ever seen. He hung on her looks ; he watched her eyes ; as if to discover the dispositions which animated a frame so faultless, and could discover nothing there but what gave indication of tempers as lovely as herself.

Seated beside her at dinner, he remarked the same superiority to pervade her conversation as her person and manner.

In the evening, Mr. Granville, who was very cheerful, proposed a reel in compliment to their *Scotch* visitor. Douglas was delighted at

the idea, and claimed the hand of Lady Georgiana, while Mr. Granville took Miss Darcliff, and Lady Malverton began a lively tune on the piano. Miss Staples, annoyed at being disregarded, gave herself up to a regular fit of ill-humour; divided between the alternate intention of flying out of the room in *visible* displeasure, or remaining till some opportunity might occur of marring the pleasure of those amused.

While resting after dancing, Lady Georgiana stood with her partner at a window near the upper end of the room, to admire the beauty of the sky, which was brilliant with stars.

Douglas described to her, in an animated manner, the effect of such an evening at Glen-allan Castle, (his uncle's seat in Scotland.) "There," said he, "where the scenery is of that wild, Alpine description, which would

have suited the pencil of Salvator, the appearance of such a night as this is grand beyond description."

"How I should like to live there!" involuntarily exclaimed Lady Georgiana; who little thought at that moment how hateful every thing connected with Glenallan would one day become to her.

"I am sure you would admire it as a landscape," returned Douglas; "but I rather fancy you would consider it too sublime for a residence. My uncle is never there since his wife's death, except in the shooting season; when I am usually with him. It has been thought like Warwick Castle—whether justly or not, I cannot tell."

"Anything which is like Warwick Castle, must be beautiful," observed Mr. Granville.

"Well," said Douglas, "I have heard many compare my uncle's place to it; but I don't know: I think Glenallan Castle more gloomy

than, from the pictures I have seen of it, I can imagine Warwick ; it is so clouded with woods—so stunning with waterfalls—so encircled by mountains.”

“ It must be such a castle as one sometimes meets with in Switzerland,” observed Lady Malverton.

“ Exactly,” said Douglas : “ when I was in Switzerland, I saw many places which reminded me of Glenallan.”

“ How long has the late Marchioness been dead ?” inquired Mrs. Vigers.

“ Nearly four years now,” returned Douglas ; “ she was an angel of a woman !” he added with a sigh.

“ Your uncle’s fortune is immense ; is not it ?” said Mr. Granville.

“ Oh, princely ! Such a fortune as you don’t meet every day. I wish I were his son.”

“ Why you have as good a chance of coming

in for it as if you were," observed Mrs. Vigers.

"Not at all, Madam," returned Douglas; "my uncle will marry, as sure as you are sitting there, whenever he meets a girl to his mind."

"He won't look out for fortune, at any rate," said Mrs. Vigers.

"No, but every thing else; and every thing else he has a right to expect."

Thus the party continued chatting, till prayers and supper concluded the evening.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Stranger, didst thou ever prove—
Ever, what it is to love ?
Stranger, didst thou ever feel
What thou dar’st not to reveal ?
I have proved, and I have felt,
What a heart of stone would melt !”

*From the Count De Meurville to the Baron
Roncevalles.*

MY DEAR BARON,

Three weeks have elapsed since you and I last shook hands at Calais, and three hours have not elapsed during that time in which I have not thought of you and your parting

words—"Remember Annette." Ah, De Roncevalles, it was an unnecessary injunction. How can I forget Annette, while I behold Agnes? How can I forget the woman I hate, when she will for ever deprive me of the woman I love. Exposing myself to the fascinations of the latter by remaining at Hermitage, is, I well know, following the inclinations of my heart. Whereas, tearing myself away from it, would be obeying the dictates of a better counsellor—my reason. But thinking, as I cannot help doing, that I am not wholly indifferent to Agnes, in spite of the displeasure she ever affects towards me when I speak to her of herself, I am unequal to the effort of leaving her, and verily believe I always shall, unless it be as her husband.

I know, I anticipate, what you will say, De Roncevalles: you will reproach me; and I deserve your reproaches. For, deaf to the voice of conscience, I am indulging a passion for one

woman, when fate has irrevocably destined me for another. But however you condemn your friend, you must not his Agnes. I am guilty of loving her, but she is innocent of seducing my love; on the contrary, it is by her lips, from which I wish to fall sentiments of affection that I am for ever reminded of my duty to another.

It was but the other day, when we happened to be alone together, she requested me to fulfil a promise I had often made, of showing her Annette's picture, which I then went for and brought to her; telling her at the same time, how much dearer it would be to me were it her own. Of this she took little notice; but said, that were she Mademoiselle Dettin-ghorffé, she would renounce a lover who was so indifferent to her as not to wear her picture when separated from her.

“ Beautiful Agnes,” said I, “ of no lover of your’s will you ever have reason to complain.”

“ Well,” returned she, “ let not Annette have reason to complain of her’s ; wear this picture, Clifford, and whenever you are tempted to forget your mistress, let its touch, like the ring of Amurath, in the fairy tale, recall your heart to its allegiance.” I threw my arms around her, I implored her to fasten round my neck the portrait which, had it been her own, would have proved a spell to soften every wild tempestuous passion, to chase every unhallowed desire.

She did not comply with my request unmoved ; tears started in her eyes, as she attached the picture to a chain she took from her neck.

“ Will you not, Agnes,” said I, sickening at the sight, “ let your gentle admonitions assist the silent influence of this cold, unlovely image. Will you not be to me the kind directing angel, whose guidance I so often need.”

“ Ah, Clifford,” returned she, averting her

eyes from the ardent gaze of mine, and hiding her blushes on my shoulder: "the Mentor would be much too inadequate; the Tele-machus far too dear."

"I wish I could think the latter," murmured I; when we heard some one approaching the door, and Agnes, swift as lightning, left the room by another. How dear!—how very dear such a creature must be to me! you, De Roncevalles, may form an idea. Love, repressed by principle, timidity, and every thing that should influence a female bosom, appears with dignity in her:—under restraints less salutary, too often with a maddening impetuosity in your friend."

* * * *

As the remainder of the Count de Meurville's letter concerns persons and things wholly uninteresting to the reader, we shall omit it: having made this quotation merely to introduce them to the situation in which he was placed; betrothed to one woman, and loving

another. The former engagement had been contracted at the earnest request of his father; whom he believed to be dying, when he extorted the promise. The latter affection was commenced when he met Agnes Mandeville abroad, though wholly unknown to her parents, who would not have bestowed her on him, all accomplished as the Count De Meurville was, and indebted as they were to him, for having been the means of saving the life of one of their sons. For, besides the necessity which a peculiar clause in her aunt's will rendered unavoidable, of losing her fortune if she married a foreigner, Lady Mandeville's vanity would induce her to prefer having Agnes well united in her own country, to being more splendidly so in another. She would rather, were it optional, be enabled to call on her, to introduce her as a Countess, than to talk of her as a Queen. With regard to Agnes, when first

she met the Count de Meurville abroad, she had been fascinated by the dignity of his manner and elevation of his mind ; while he, brought up in an intriguing Court, acquainted with the dissimulation of man, still better with the wiles of woman, beheld with admiration in her a creature uninitiated by the flattery of the former, apparently a stranger to even the innocent artifices of the latter. And for a girl who continued thus unsophisticated, when the example of all around her was calculated to corrupt, he felt, to use the simile of an admired writer, as we should do at beholding a beautiful child playing on the verge of a precipice ; with Lady Mandeville for a mother, who possessed no refinement or delicacy of mind, and sisters who followed her example. The Count de Meurville pitied Agnes, who had but lately come among them ; and the pity of an elegant and interesting man,

for a lovely and amiable girl, soon kindled, as may be imagined, into love. Into love, rather expressed by looks than words; increased by the confiding gentleness of her manner, and encouraged by the value she placed on *his*; which was entirely regulated by her conduct: when he perceived any inclination to levity or pride he was cold and reserved towards her; when a perseverance in what was right and pleasing, all that could be delightful in man. Thus, with his manners for her guide, his looks for her reward, did Agnes, while abroad, remain uncontaminated by the advice and example of her mother and sisters. But on their return to England the charm was dissolved, or, at least, its power lessened:—she there learnt, for the first time, that the man she had adored, whom she had looked up to as a being of a superior order, and whom to pass life with she had often fancied would brighten this world, and elevate

her hopes of the next, was the prize of another; and of *another* as sensible of his charms, though not as worthy to enjoy them as herself. Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe, the betrothed wife of De Meurville, felt for him a regard to which his for her bore not the faintest resemblance; and when she could not behold him, was never so happy, as in writing to or hearing from her “dear Clifford.”

Become aware of this prior claim to his affections, Agnes endeavoured no longer to excite them; and conscious that implicitly following his direction as she had once done, would be still owning his influence—which she ought to renounce—frequently acted in exact opposition to it: unwarily giving her lover the triumph of beholding the effort it cost her, and often undoing the whole by being brought at his intreaties to confess the greatness of the sacrifice she had made. Thus was Agnes si-

tuated with the Count de Meurville — systematically concealing, but involuntarily betraying her fondness, convinced that his presence was undermining her peace, but that separation from it would be endless, unutterable woe.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Yes Marianne, I freely grant
The charm of Henry’s eyes I see ;
But while I gaze I something want,
I want those eyes to gaze on me.”

OPIE.

THE time prescribed by etiquette had intervened since sending notes of invitation to the Hermitage and other places, when loud and incessant knocks at Abbeville proclaimed the arrival of the company invited. Last of all, according to their usual custom, came the Mandeville party, consisting of the Baronet, his wife, Miss Mandeville, and the Count de Meurville. Her Ladyship, dressed

in white satin, with a magnificent turban on her head; her daughter in a richly sprigged muslin. Lady Mandeville entered, as she delighted to do, with a sort of bustle and sensation of her own creating. Looking very large in figure, and showily handsome in face, she volubly expressed her regret at being so late, her fears that they had caused delay of dinner, mingled with a customary measure of abuse on clocks, horses, and coachmen, and concluded with apologizing for Mrs. Damer, who she said had so tired herself with walking in the morning that she could not come with them to dinner, but would, if able, join those invited for the evening. While her mother was thus excusing, declaiming, and declaring, Miss Mandeville, reserved and inanimate, looked like a drooping snow-drop by her side.

As the family at Abbeville, with whom Mr. Granville and Mr. Douglas were still stopping, had, within these few days, been further enlarg-

ed by the arrival of Lady Vignoles, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vigers, her husband, and three daughters, it had been thought unnecessary to invite more than the Mandevilles, the Boswells, and Torrens, to dinner ; but several additions were to appear in the evening. Lady Georgiana felt very much mortified at the indifference with which she was beheld by the Count de Meurville ; she, who had been accustomed to strike with admiration bordering on wonder, was annoyed indeed, not to meet one wandering glance from him, except the unavoidable one at introduction.

Her Ladyship, with all the consciousness of beauty, smiled at such apathy, and was confirmed in an idea she had taken up from the moment of hearing that he was so uncommonly interesting, and Agnes Mandeville so more than usually attractive ; namely, that they were lovers. During dinner the conversation was lively and agreeable ; and the ladies, when re-

tired to the drawing-room, were not reduced to such dulness as sometimes happens. There was, almost immediately, the agreeable interruption of coffee, and very soon afterwards the company invited for the evening arrived; amongst whom were Mrs. Damer, Charlotte and Clermont Mandeville, Miss M^c Dougal and her brother. When the gentlemen began to leave the dining-room, Lady Georgiana was requested to sit down to her harp; but her Ladyship, who wished to defer commencing till the Count de Meurville entered, anxious to see whether he would add his solicitations to the rest, parried the request with all the coquettish airs of beauty, and declared

“She could not, would not, durst not play;”

when, unaware of his being one of her auditors, her eyes suddenly met, and fell beneath the flashing glance of the Austrian.—The pride of Georgiana surmounting her

vanity, she determined no longer to indulge either in presence of a man who she strongly suspected despised both, and she therefore at once sat down unaffectedly to the instrument.

The Count de Meurville, seeing nothing so repellingly arrogant and overbearingly spoilt, in a girl whom a single unintentional look had evidently recalled from levity and affectation to simplicity and dignity, determined to pay her, for the rest of the evening, the attention which some previous hints thrown out by Miss Mandeville had hitherto prevented him from doing.

Like King James, he

“ O'er the Syren hung,
And beat the measure as she sung ;
Then pressing closer and more near,
Whisper'd soft praises in her ear.”

Flattered by his manner, Lady Georgiana exerted all her powers of voice and execution ; and they were so wonderfully great, as at

times to leave her hearers in breathless amazement and admiration, unable to conceive that singing so magically varied, and playing so brilliantly striking, was effected by a form so fragile and fingers so delicate. After finishing the beautiful air of the “Castilian Maid,” her Ladyship requested Miss Mandeville, who had hitherto declined, to take the harp, and the latter consenting, on condition Lady Georgiana would accompany her on the piano, they performed together, “Now at moonlight fairy hour.” While music was thus engaging some, others were occupied by cards, conversation, or looking over the new books, pictures, &c. which lay scattered on different tables about the room.

Mr. Douglas and Charlotte Mandeville were involved in the intricacies of a French puzzle, which seemed to cause mutual embarrassment and amusement.

The two Baronets, Sir William and Sir Ge-

rald, with Mrs. Torrens and the Countess of Malverton, made up a whist table ; while Lady Vignoles, Mrs. Merton, Mr. Boswell, and Mr. Torrens, were engaged at casino, and Mr. Granville and Mrs. Damer were poring over a game of chess ; which the frequent though suppressed yawns of the former, and automaton-like silence of the latter, seemed to intimate very stupid.

Miss Staples, observing Miss Mandeville looking at a veil which she had finished the day before, and now thrown with some fancy work on a table for display ; ventured to approach, with the hackneyed assurance, “ That what she was regarding was not at all worth her notice.”

“ And why not ?” asked Miss Mandeville, in a chilling tone ; as she took up a flounce which was lying beside it.

“ Oh, I did it in such a hurry,” returned Miss Staples ; “ and you, who work so delight-

fully yourself, must be so accustomed to seeing things well done."

"I never work," carelessly replied Miss Mandeville.

"You are grown idle then," timidly remarked Miss Staples.

"Not grown so, for I was at no time otherwise."

"I have a better memory," observed Miss Staples, with a smile, which seemed to expect a corresponding one.

"What does it recall?" inquired Miss Mandeville, fixing her languid eyes on her companion.

"It recalls to my mind a beautiful scarf you worked before you went abroad," returned Miss Staples.

"Beautiful!" repeated Miss Mandeville, whom flattery even could not conciliate; "don't profane terms," she added, as Mr. Granville

who had just finished his game, came over to the table.

“ Miss Mandeville,” said the latter, “ I am come to scold you for having been the means of losing me my game, which was at the beginning in a prosperous way.”

“ How was I unhappy enough to occasion its concluding differently,” inquired Miss Mandeville, in her softest accents.

“ Why, that angel voice of your’s put all my ideas in confusion, till at last I could not distinguish a king from a rook, and Mrs. Damer check-mated me.”

“ I was not aware that I was doing so much mischief when singing,” observed Miss Mandeville, “ or I should have stopped ; but what reparation can I make ?” added she.

“ Oh, sing me another song,” cried he : “ though one has already ruined me ; I delight to hear you.”

“Indeed,” returned she, languidly, “there is enough going on without my joining.

“I would not,” said Mr. Granville, taking her hand to lead her to the harp—“I would not hear a seraph choir unless your voice could join the rest.”

“Not now, not now, I intreat you,” remonstrated she; “I am tired; it’s getting late.”

“What!” said Mr. Vigers, coming towards them, “do I hear Miss Mandeville, the Parisian beauty, the London belle, the initiated votary of fashion, talk of its being late at eleven o’clock.”

“Late enough for the country, indeed, Sir,” returned she.

“Well,” said Mr. Vigers, “I am glad to see that there is a young lady so reasonable left in the world; but I hope you won’t refuse to take a bit of chicken or sandwich,” added he, as the supper tray was brought in.

“Oh, no,” replied Miss Mandeville; “I am

not one of your refusers, I assure you; I leave that for Mrs. Damer," she added, as the latter approached her.

"Is she a great one for negatives?" inquired Mr. Vigers; when he was called away by Mrs. Torrens.

"I am sure," said Miss Mandeville, turning to Mr. Granville, "you, who were sitting next her, must have discovered that."

"To tell you the truth, Miss Mandeville," whispered he, "I am at a loss to conceive how Mr. Damer could ever have been so happy as to prevail on her to say I will."

Miss Mandeville smiled; and Mrs. Damer just then crossed the room to inform her that the carriage had been ordered, and that her mother thought she had better take something before she went away.

"I shall not take what I was shocked to see you take the other night, Caroline," returned Miss Mandeville.

“ What was that ?” asked Mrs. Damer.

“ Nothing more nor less than filberts, which they were gothic enough to have in the evening at Mrs. Coningsby’s, and you were country-fied enough to eat.”

“ They are not here to tempt you,” observed Mrs. Damer, good-humouredly.

“ They never tempt me,” returned Miss Mandeville, with a withering glance, as she moved towards the supper tray.

“ What shall I help you to ?” cried Mr. Granville ; “ your sister is paying her devoirs to the anchovies, perhaps you will follow her example ?”

“ You might do worse, Madelina,” cried Charlotte ; “ might not she, Sir Gerald ?”

“ I say, yes,” replied the Baronet, dislocating a chicken.

“ Well, suppose you give me a sandwich then,” said Miss Mandeville, holding out a plate.

“ Suppose I give you two,” returned Mr. Granville, helping her.

“ Oh, no ! one is abundance, I assure you.”

“ Mrs. Boswell,” cried Sir Gerald, “ you promised to take a bit of chicken.”

“ It is so white and nice,” said she, coming over, “ I cannot resist, though I do not know what Dr. Grosvenor would say to me ; he gave such strict injunctions about my eating nothing in the shape of supper.”

“ He shall hear nothing of it,” cried Sir Gerald ; “ or, if he should, I ’ll take all the blame of enticing you to sin on myself.”

“ For the life of me,” exclaimed Clermont Mandeville, helping himself to some cold pie, “ I cannot think what makes these fat, comfortable physicians, starve all the pretty women. There ’s not a lady you meet now, but has been put on prison fare by one or other of them.”

“ Perhaps,” said Mr. Granville, “ they con-

sider the race already too formidable to need propagation."

"There's Grosvenor," continued young Mandeville, "who has fed himself within an inch of his life, and prescribed for his person till it is so large he can scarce walk, recommends every one else to fast, that he can get to give him a guinea for his advice."

"I suspect," said Mr. Torrens, "he never got a guinea of yours, Mr. Mandeville."

"No, nor ever will; I would not have a physician if I were dying.

"Nor a clergyman either, perhaps," said Charlotte.

"No, nor a clergyman either; for I shall be one, and would preach to myself."

"You would leave the world in a happy state of independence, Clermont," observed the Count de Meurville.

"Yes, I shall look on you all with contempt, and exclaim with the Cardinal,

'Vain pomp and glory of the world,
I hate you.'"

“ In the meantime,” said Sir William, “ we had better get home. The carriages are at the door, Lady Mandeville, do you return in the chariot or barouche ?”

“ Oh, I, De Meurville, and Madelin, agreed we would go back in the chariot. You and the rest may proceed in the coach.”

This settled, they wished good night, and after an adjusting of cloaks and shawls, at which Miss Staples, Miss Darcliff, and some of the gentlemen presided, got into their carriages, and drove off ; leaving the remainder of the company to follow their example, which they did immediately.

“ Well, they are all off now,” cried Mr. Granville, as he returned to the drawing-room, after handing Mrs. Boswell, who was last, to her carriage ; “ and I see Alicia is pulling her chair towards the table, for a regular talk over.”

“ Oh, no,” said the Countess, “ only a skirmish ; we will reserve the grand talk over till

breakfast. I just want to hear Dorothea's opinion of the Mandevilles, whether she thinks them changed in any way."

"Indeed, I do," said Lady Vignoles; "though, to be sure, it is seven or eight years since I saw them, and only what one might expect. But I think Lady Mandeville twice as large as when I met her last; and Miss Mandeville looks like a shadow."

"In my life," exclaimed Mr. Granville, "I never saw a creature so altered as Miss Mandeville; why when I met her in London about this time three years, she was as different a girl as it is possible to conceive."

"She has lost all her colour," observed Mrs. Vigers, "and a great deal of her animation."

"She has lost every thing that was beautiful about her, I think," remarked Miss Staples.

"Not quite so bad," said the Countess; "she wore a sickly coloured flower in her hair, which

made her complexion look to disadvantage. But her eyes are sweet, and her features and figure elegant."

"There is," observed Lady Vignoles, "a native ease in Miss Mandeville's manners which I admire."

There is, thought Miss Staples, a native insolence which I detest.

"Her sister Charlotte is the most lively creature I ever saw," observed Mr. Douglas, who had been flirting with her all the evening.

"More lively," said Mr. Granville, "than I suspect you would like a wife or sister of yours."

"Perhaps so," returned Douglas, musing; "but that manner has its fascination," he added in a quicker tone; "and will ensnare some rich old man, or thoughtless young spendthrift."

"And what will ensue in either case?" asked Lady Vignoles, winding up her watch.

"Why, if she marries the first, she'll break

his heart : if the second, he'll break her's," replied Douglas, coolly.

And after a little more conversation, they retired to their respective apartments : Lady Georgiana thinking of the Count de Meurville, and of the happiness of Agnes, in having so fascinating a lover ; for that he was her lover, the very manner in which he pronounced her name, convinced her. He spoke of drawings, and offered to lend her those of his which Agnes had copied, of songs, and pointed out those in her collection which Agnes sung. Leaving Georgiana convinced that all her attractions would be unavailing to conquer him, and also persuaded that the Count de Meurville was capable of inspiring something greater than a temporary fascination—of exciting sentiments more warm than admiration, more lasting than love.

CHAPTER IX.

“ And what is friendship but a name,
A charm which lulls to sleep ;
A shade which follows wealth and fame,
And leaves the wretch to weep !”

LADY Vignoles, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vigers, had been married young to a Baronet in the North of England ; and residing there in complete retirement with her family, which consisted of three daughters and a son, her Ladyship, though amiable and informed to the highest degree, had lost (or never possessed) that polish of manner and elegance of appearance, which greater intercourse with the Fashionable world would have improved or

implanted, and which distinguished her sister, the Countess of Malverton.

From living so secluded, Lady Vignoles had also contracted a carelessness with regard to dress, unfavourable to her appearance, and an adhesiveness to her own opinions in conversation, likely to impress a stranger with less pleasing sentiments respecting her, than she deserved to inspire.

The three Miss Vignoles, who were about the ages of thirteen, fifteen, and seventeen, inherited, in a lesser degree, their mother's peculiarities; and in the inattention of their manners, and neglect of their persons, formed a striking contrast to their cousin, Lady Georgiana Granville.

As the governess of these young ladies had not accompanied them into Surrey, their mother devoted the entire of her mornings to them, not wishing that even on a visit they should neglect those habits of study and restriction to which they had been hitherto

accustomed, and which the example of Lady Georgiana, who was unrestrained by any such observations, seemed peculiarly likely to undermine. Frequent were the interruptions of the latter lady, during their studies, to request Lady Vignoles would allow them to come out, driving or walking, with her and her mother. But not all the smiles and caresses of Georgiana could prevail on her aunt to depart from her systematic plans, of which futurity was to prove the superior advantages.

Wishing to do every thing that could be thought of for the entertainment of Lady Vignoles, during her stay at the Abbey, the Countess of Malverton and Mrs. Vigers perpetually promoted the acceptance of invitations abroad, and forming of parties at home; and thinking if Lady Vignoles could be prevailed on to sacrifice a morning to amusement, and allow the girls to do the same, that going to Mount Morning, the place mentioned by the Mandeville

ville, might afford some, the Countess proposed, after speaking to her sister, to write to Miss Mandeville, and arrange a day for the excursion. This she accordingly did, and received an answer from the latter, expressive of the pleasure they would feel in having their party increased by the addition of Lady Vignoles and her daughters; and proposing, if no previous engagement interfered, that the family from Abbeville should breakfast next morning at Hermitage, and proceed from thence to Colonel Blomberg's.

Aware of the extreme lateness of the Mandeville's hours, the Countess, and those who were to accompany her, breakfasted very quietly about ten at the Abbey, and did not set out for Hermitage till just eleven. When they arrived there, they found the family assembled in the parlour, and after the customary salutations and inquiries, every one sat down to

breakfast, which presented in its arrangements a happy accommodation to English and foreign tastes. Lady Malverton perceiving many absent at table, whom she believed to be in the house, she could not avoid asking Lady Mandeville, who sat next to her, after them.

“Oh!” returned her **Ladyship**, whose face was encompassed in a blaze of Brussels lace, “there was never such a thing heard of in the annals of our proceedings, as all assembling together in the morning, though we might be in ever such a state of preservation; some breakfast, Sir William for one, before I am up, others will by and by in their own apartments, and a few perhaps may stroll down here in an hour or two, and order something.”

The Countess smiled, but could not help inwardly thinking such independent proceedings gave a similitude to an hotel, derogatory to the dignity of a gentleman’s house.

“ Now, ladies,” cried Colonel Blomberg, who was helping himself to some cold oyster-pie at a side-table, “ I beg you will not raise your expectations of Mount Morning too high, for there is no room for it, I assure you. The grounds are well laid out; the house good; and the view from some of the windows beautiful: but, these I know, are not the things ladies look after: and of those they do, in the shape of fine furniture, pictures, and china, there is a very indifferent assortment.”

“ It is a libel on ladies’ taste to talk so,” observed Mrs. Damer, as she made room for the Colonel, who returned to the table with his plate replenished with pie.

“ Not at all,” returned he, seating himself; “ women are domestic creatures; and like best the things which contribute to domestic pleasures. What is the architecture of a building, or the site on which it is raised, or the

cold, heavy water, and great dull trees about it, said to constitute its beauty, to them?"

"Of great importance, indeed, Colonel Blomberg," said Lady Mandeville. "I will not allow women to be such concentrated, contracted-minded beings as to be indifferent to such things. They can, when they choose it, enter with as much advantage into the modelling of a building, as into the arrangement of a drawing-room; are as alive to the beauty of a landscape, as to the brilliancy of a mirror."

"You say so, do you?" said the Colonel. "Well, you, as a woman, should know; but I always understood differently."

"You understood, Colonel?" repeated Sidney Mandeville; "why I should have thought you were sufficiently a man of gallantry to be enabled to speak from experiences."

"You thought him better acquainted with the tastes of the fair," said Mr. Fraser, smiling.

“ I thought,” said Sidney, seeing the subject was not disagreeable to the Colonel; “ I thought his

‘ Only books
Were woman’s looks.’

Instead of that, ladies, he disdains all knowledge of your tastes and preferences.”

“ Cruel, ungallant Colonel Blomberg,” exclaimed Charlotte Mandeville, “ to interest himself so little about the sex he affects so much to admire.”

“ I verily believe,” observed Clermont, “ he would rather they admired him.”

“ It is not the way to induce them to do so,” observed Miss Mandeville.

“ Rather the contrary, I think,” remarked Mrs. Damer.

“ By my life,” cried the Colonel, “ it is rather too bad to have you all running down my reputation as a man of gallantry, when the thing I like best in the world is woman.”

“ Well, Sir,” said Mr. Granville, who had come with the Abbeville party, “ you will have an opportunity of redeeming your character with the ladies, by your attentions to-day.”

“ I fear not,” replied he, mixing his tea in a tumbler of cold water. “ They say reputation once lost, is lost for ever.”

“ A woman’s reputation,” observed Lady Malverton.

“ Only a woman’s? Lady Malverton, you give me comfort,” said he. “ And see,” he added, looking at Agnes,

“ Hope enchanting smiles, and waves her golden hair.”

“ I smile, Colonel Blomberg,” said Agnes, “ to hear you talk of hope who never felt despair.”

“ A truce to both,” cried Sidney, starting up, “ and if you have all done, let us ring for horses and carriages.”

“ What do you say, Countess?” inquired Lady Mandeville.

“ Oh, I am ready,” returned the Countess ; “ suppose we retire and adjust our dresses.”

“ Why you have only to put on your bonnets,” cried the Colonel, “ and I shall be most happy to tie them all.”

“ Very good indeed, Blomberg,” exclaimed Sidney : “ a very fair beginning, but I would advise the ladies to keep clear of you for fear you should kiss them.”

“ They seem to suspect me of some such design,” observed the Colonel, “ to judge from the haste of their decampment,” he added, laughing at the ladies, who huddled promiscuously out of the room. “ But,” he continued, in a *sotto voce*, “ what an angelic face that Lady Georgiana Granville has !”

“ Do you think her beautiful ?” drawled out Clermont.

“ Beautiful ! beyond any thing, beautiful !” returned the Colonel. “ Why she ’ll turn the

heads of all the men in London, when she goes there next winter."

"Not quite all, I hope," said Clermont, "for I intend my little sister Agnes to do some mischief; if Lady Georgiana turns heads, she must conquer hearts."

"In truth," cried Colonel Blomberg, "your sister being in London would make some difference; Lady Georgiana would not have the field to herself then. But I had an idea you were to spend next winter in Edinburgh."

"We had thoughts of it," said Clermont, "having found it pleasant two or three seasons since. But I don't know, London, I believe, will be our quarters after all."

"You might be in worse," observed the Colonel. "But come, let us look at the horse we were speaking of last night (it is leading up and down the terrace) and leave De Meurville spelling the Courier."

“Not spelling it, indeed,” said the Count de Meurville, throwing down the paper and rising to join them; “it is very dull to-day. But that horse you allude to, Blomberg,” continued he, “is my Arabian, and if you would like to buy her you shall have a bargain.”

“I fancy it would be beyond my mark, notwithstanding,” observed the Colonel; “or else she is a pretty creature—I admire her greatly.”

“Yes, she is a showy horse,” returned the Count, as they went to the hall door, outside of which horses and carriages were paraded. “Here Kassian,” cried the Count to his groom, “bring up Mocha.”

“It is a nice animal, upon my word,” said the Colonel, stroking it, “if it is not vicious, but these buff horses I know often are.”

“They often are,” returned the Count; “but Mocha is not; only just spirit enough

about her, and no tricks or blemishes, that I ever discovered."

"How much did you give for her?" inquired Colonel Blomberg.

"Oh, more than I should like to tell," replied the Count; "but I would give her you for less, for I have associations connected with the animal which will prevent my ever liking her. I was riding her one day when abroad," continued the Count, "in company with the best and dearest friend I ever had, when he was thrown from his horse and killed upon the spot."

"I don't wonder you should dislike such a *memento mori*," said the Colonel; "and I should be very likely to deprive you of it if I thought my weight wouldn't be too great."

"Why you are not as tall as De Meurville," remarked Sidney.

"No, but I am much stouter."

"Height goes more against a horse than

bulk," observed Mr. Granville, who had walked towards them."

"But both united would be too much for this animal, I am convinced," said the Colonel; "or else it is just the thing I should like."

"She seems intended for a lady's horse, I think," remarked Mr. Granville: "you should buy her, Colonel, and keep her for the future Mrs. Blomberg."

"I might as well advise my friend here, who wishes to part with her, to keep her for the future Countess de Meurville," observed Colonel Blomberg, with a smile.

"Mocha would be likely to be longer without a mistress in my case, than yours," said the Count de Meurville, with a sigh.

"Not if report speaks true, Count," returned the Colonel; "that, with every other title to glory, has long ago assigned you the conquest of a female heart."

"You may pluralize the matter, I believe,"

said Sidney, with a meaning smile, as he and the rest of the gentlemen went to join the ladies who were assembling in the hall.

“ Well,” cried Mr. Mandeville, “ who’s for the carriage now at the door? How many shall I have the honour of handing into the Abbeville barouche?—it is smaller than ours, keep in mind.”

“ More fashionable,” remarked his mother.

“ Less useful,” observed the Countess.

“ Suppose,” said Lady Mandeville, turning to the latter, “ that you, your daughter Madeleine, and I, go in the other carriage.”

“ Agreed,” returned the Countess.

“ While Lady Vignoles, her two young ladies, Mrs. Damer, and Agnes, go in this,” continued her Ladyship.

The plan being settled, each party arranged themselves in their respective seats, while the gentlemen rode promiscuously before, beside, and behind: employed alternately in re-

connoitring chatting, and settling their plans, till they reached Mount Morning. For an account of their proceedings there, we shall refer our readers to a letter written by Mrs. Damer, a few days after.

From Mrs. Damer to her Sister Miss Falconer.

“ MY DEAR ANNE,

“ I should have written to you before, had inclination alone been necessary ; but want of time has been my insurmountable barrier. I find myself, day after day, involved in the same series of engagements and dissipation, which I had hoped exclusively indulged in at the time of my marriage ; and of the little pleasure of which, for a continuance, you, as having been here about that period, can form an idea. Too late in our hours at night to render it possible to rise till near twelve on the morrow, the morning, which at home used to be so long and pleasant, is

here apparently short, and wasted in indolence, while the rest of the day is consumed in dressing, driving, and company.

This manner of passing my time would be less intolerable, did it promise to be of more transitory endurance; or could I perceive in Charles a distaste correspondent to my own, for such a thoughtless, useless life. But, on the contrary, the time of our departure from Hermitage is seldom mentioned by him, and that of our residence here frequently, as most delightful.

To him it may easily be delightful, in comparison to what it is to me, whose greatest source of complaint does not even arise from the circumstances I have mentioned, but from the unkindness of Lady Mandeville and her daughters, among whom I am of course principally thrown for society, and whose powers of annoying exceed every thing you can suppose. Till I knew Miss Mandeville, I certainly little

supposed how much maliciousness the female bosom is capable of harbouring, and how easily excited ; still less how effectually it may be concealed in blandishment of manner and address. She, however, has fully instructed me, and caused me to repent ever having flattered her vanity by a confession, which, in the commencement of our acquaintance, when she was appearing in all the ease of her manner, I, in the unfortunate *mauvaise honte* of mine, was induced to make ; namely, my wish to imitate and resemble her : for, from the moment of that confession, made when I believed her disposition as amiable as her person is prepossessing, she has assumed towards me a triumphant insolence and patronizing superiority, the most mortifying. Often, wounded by her unkindness, I retire weeping to my apartment, leaving her to inform my husband, when he enters the drawing-room, that his wife has just quitted it, dissolved in tears at some *trifling* observation, with regard

to her manner, or suggestion for the improvement of her dress, which she was unhappy enough to venture on, knowing his wishes on the subject: irritated by such a report, Charles, who is warm in his temper, flies up to me, and in an annoyed tone reproaches me for the little command I possess over myself, thinks I must be aware that any thing Miss Mandeville notices to me, is for my advantage, and ought so to be appreciated. On one occasion, indeed, he was unkind enough to insinuate, that my not receiving her advice as I ought, intimated a pride, and self-sufficiency, which it was my duty to overcome.

Roused by a reproach so unjust, I could not avoid exclaiming, “Oh, Charles! was any advice or remonstrance from your lips ever despised or disregarded by me? let *you* only admonish me—let *you* only correct me, and you shall have no reason to complain of disobedience; but let not an unfeeling, arrogant girl assume

that power." Instead of being flattered or conciliated by my exclusive preference to himself, he appeared only surprised and displeased at my allusion to Madeline: inquiring what she had done to deserve the epithets I bestowed on her: that it was at his request she had been kind enough to give me any hints with regard to my dress and manner, which her superior acquaintance with the etiquette of fashion enabled her to do; and without allowing myself to reflect from whom the advice would be most agreeable, I should gratefully have received it from the person best qualified to impart it.

"From her—from any one, would I receive it," cried I, "who I thought had my good at heart; but Miss Mandeville, I am sure, has not; and far from wishing me to appear to advantage, is only desirous of the contrary."

My husband was for a moment silenced; but presently recovering, asked what reason I

had to suppose so?—that Madeline had always expressed herself in the most affectionate terms to him regarding me, and as anxious that I should look well in every respect.

To you, thought I, she may very probably make such professions; to me, she proves their fallacy. But not wishing to prolong a difference, into which I had been betrayed by the warmth of my feelings, and which I was aware would only end in incredulity on his part, and consequently, redoubled mortification on mine, I was silent; and he proceeded to declare that, though it gave him pain to say so, he could not but attribute my dislike to his cousin to pique at having been spoken to by her: “As if,” he added, “any reproach or disgrace could be attached to not being intimate with those trifling observances, which the retired life you have led put it out of your power to be acquainted with,—the dissipated one she has, equally out of her’s not to be. And this affair

ended like some others of the same kind, in an affected reconciliation between me and Miss Mandeville ; who, mistress, I believe, of every art of dissimulation, expressed such sorrow before Charles at any thing like a misunderstanding having arisen between us, that he thought me, I am sure, of an unforgiving disposition, when I but coldly held out my hand to meet the one she so warmly proffered ; but her touch felt to me as it were that of the torpedo ; and of the insincerity of any of her expressions of friendship, not a day passes without giving me proof.

Charlotte Mandeville, equally bitter in her dislike to me, does not resort to dissimulation to conceal it, and will create a laugh against me as readily in my presence as absence, while Arabella, unprepossessing and unnoticed in any way, is, I believe, indifferent to me : but Agnes, either from better policy or better nature, plays consoling angel to the wounds

which others inflict; and often have her sweet accents of compassion, whether dictated by the wishes of De Meurville, whom I can easily see she studies at times to please, or the impulses of her own yet unvitiated heart, recalled me to society I had left dispirited and unhappy.

But I am filling my paper in relating my grievances, instead of describing, as I intended at sitting down, a rural excursion we made the other day, and which, as my letter goes in a frank, I may yet be enabled to add an account of. It was undertaken to view a house and grounds at some little distance from here, belonging to Colonel Blomberg, whom you may recollect having seen when at the Hermitage, and who is a great admirer of Agnes. Besides our own party, which is never inconsiderable, we had an addition from Abbeville, of the Countess of Malverton, her sister, Lady Vignoles, and brother-in-law, Mr. Granville, with

Lady Georgiana, and two of the Miss Vignoles's ; all of whom breakfasted with us on the day of our excursion, and proceeded in company with us to Mount Morning, which we reached about three o'clock, and found to exceed our expectation in every respect. The house is large and admirably situated ; the grounds beautiful and tastefully disposed. An elegant collation was prepared in the dining-room, which the Colonel wished us to partake of immediately after our arrival, but which we declined touching till we had looked a little about us. Agreeably to our inclinations, therefore, we began a survey of the mansion, which, *en passant*, fell into the hands of its present possessor by the death of his brother, a man who had amassed an immense fortune in India, and spared no expense on this place, which was his constant residence.

Though the Colonel, among several other things, had deprecated his collection of pictures,

there was a gallery filled with very fine ones; not only of his family, but of many illustrious personages in history; among whom, Henrietta, Queen of England, as she appeared in her first interview with Charles, and Anne Bullen, in character of maid of honour to Queen Catharine. shone conspicuous in beauty, and were thought by some of our party to resemble Lady Georgiana Granville and Agnes Mandeville. Between the former and Lady Georgiana I saw little likeness; the dark piquant eyes of the one possessing none of the splendid characteristics of the other; but between Anne Bullen and Agnes, I saw much; there danced in her eyes, there played about her mouth, there vibrated—it would almost seem through her very veins—the same joyous, triumphant, exulting, yet courtly, controllable, pardonable consciousness, of being an object all lovely and beloved. I could have stood looking at her for ever; and while I was doing so, the Count

de Meurville came over, and asked me what I thought of the picture. "Oh, it's beautiful!" said I, "and the image of Agnes Mandeville."

"You are very generous," said he, "to allow so much to one, whom some in your place might consider as a rival."

"I never could be so vain as to consider Agnes Mandeville in that light," said I; "her superiority in beauty is too decided."

"And yet experience has proved," returned he, smiling, "that all the world were not of that opinion. Her cousin saw in you superior charms."

"More attainable ones, probably," said I; "but superior would have been impossible."

The Count de Meurville shook his head. "Well, if you are determined to be so humble," said he, "I will not contradict you; but I know Agnes thinks very differently both of herself and you."

“ It may be so,” said I ; and as I spoke we turned into the library, where Agnes, the charming Agnes, and many others were collected. She was standing at an open window with Lord Yalbroke ; and whatever had been the subject of their conversation, it had caused in her countenance a most brilliant glow, and in his Lordship’s an expression of seriousness, such as I had never before seen it wear. Evidently afraid of meeting the Count de Meurville’s eyes, though I do not think they were at that moment seeking her’s, Agnes began to pull the flowering shrubs, which crept in at the window, most unmercifully ; and when he approached her, which he did as soon as Lord Yalbroke had quitted the room, confirmed me by her manner towards him, in an opinion I have long ago taken up, of their being attached to each other. It was of that timid encouraging description, which a woman only adopts towards a man whom she loves ; and

must have put to flight any fears her conference with Lord Yalbroke might have occasioned him. After conversing together some time, they began to look at different books which were scattered about; and I observed him point out to her some lines in one, which curiosity afterwards induced me to search for, and I found to be a quotation from Scott's beautiful stanzas, addressed to Agnes in the "Tales of my Landlord."

"What conquest o'er each erring thought
Of that fierce realm has Agnes wrought!
Mine ireful mood her sweetness tamed,
And soothed each wound which pride inflamed."

Observing me noticing the lines, and suspecting probably the motive which induced me, Agnes asked me if they were not very pretty? that De Meurville had just pointed them out to her as addressed to one of her name.

"They are very pretty," said I; "and pro-

bably," I added, in a lower tone, "he meant them as very appropriate."

"He? the writer, you mean, I suppose," said she, quickly. But her eyes sank beneath the meaning glance of mine as she added, "I am one of the very few who have not read this tale."

"No; I mean De Meurville," returned I.

"Do you suppose," said she, smiling and looking out of the window, as if at some far distant object—"Do you suppose

'His ireful mood my sweetness tamed?' "

"Something of the kind," observed I: when our attention was called to some medals Colonel Blomberg was exhibiting, and which were very curious. After examining them, we descended to the dining-room to refresh ourselves, and from thence took a stroll about the grounds; the heat, which had been oppressive in the morning, having greatly subsided.

"One would think," said Mr. Granville, as some of us were standing in a group together; "one would think a lady had arranged these pleasure grounds, they are so well disposed."

"A lady's taste influenced their arrangement," observed Colonel Blomberg.

"Ah, ah! Colonel," said the gentlemen, with a general laugh, "we thought there was a lady in the case."

"The next thing to hear," observed Miss Mandeville, "will be that she is a pretty lady."

"Then that you won't hear, Miss Mandeville," said the Colonel, "for she is a very plain lady."

"Young, perhaps?" remarked Lady Vignoles.

"Rather the contrary," replied Colonel Blomberg.

"Fascinating, without doubt?" said the Countess of Malverton.

“ No, blunt and cross to all mankind :—my aunt, in short.”

“ It must have been in an auspicious moment,” observed the Count de Meurville, “ you got her to sketch the plan for this, then.”

“ I was thinking,” said Mr. Granville, “ what bribery he could have used to induce her.”

“ Oh, she is not so tough as all that!” cried the Colonel. “ She is a woman, and therefore must be woo’d ; she is a woman, and therefore may be won. But, after all, doing a thing of this kind was gratifying to her vanity. She was aware that whenever these grounds were admired, the name of their planner would be mentioned.”

“ She had taste, at any rate,” observed Lady Mandeville ; “ indeed, it seems a characteristic of the family,” her Ladyship politely added.

“ How I envy you your future aunt !” said Sidney, aside to his sister Agnes ; “ it will be so pleasant to have a person of that kind

related to one ; and delivering lectures from morning till night on extravagance, and such like."

" She will never have it in her power to lecture me," replied Agnes, haughtily turning away.

After Colonel Blomberg had shown us the gardens and prettiest parts of his estate, the Countess of Malverton and Lady Mandeville mutually proposed preparing for our return : the latter declaring that Sir William must not be kept too long waiting for his dinner ; the former, that her mother would expect them by eight, or so.

Accordingly, the carriages and horses were summoned, and each party, after expressions of pleasure and satisfaction, set out for their respective homes. Colonel Blomberg accompanied us back to Hermitage. And now, my dear Anne, with love to all at home, and wishing that I was there, I must conclude

this long letter. Believe me, ever yours, most affectionately,

CAROLINE DAMER.

Hermitage.

P. S. The Abbeville family dine here to-morrow. I long to see Lady Vignoles again; she is a delightful woman, and seems to me a little to resemble our dear mother."

CHAPTER X.

“ Unthinking, idle, wild, and young,
They talk’d, they laugh’d, they danced, and sung ;
And proud of health, of freedom vain,
Dream’d not of sorrow, care, and pain.

PRINCESS AMELIA.

THE family from Abbeville, as the postscript of Mrs. Damer’s letter mentioned, were all invited to dine at Hermitage a few days after the Mount Morning excursion. And Mr. and Mrs. Vigers, Sir Gerald and Lady Vignoles, with the Countess of Malverton and Lady Georgiana Granville, went as dinner guests: while the three Miss Vignoles, their mother preferring, came in the evening.

The hour notified for dinner had been six o'clock, and Mr. Vigers, who was a great stickler for punctuality, insisted on his family not being later than a quarter past, and about that time they were ushered into the drawing-room at Hermitage, after the usual etceteras of unshawling and announcing ; forming a more conspicuous group by their number than was agreeable to the fastidious mind of the Countess ; who, with her daughter, would have preferred coming in the evening, had not the previously reiterated entreaties of Lady Mandeville for them all to dine, silenced her objections.

The room, which was very large, and furnished with such resemblance to an upholsterer's as to render it difficult to cross, was filled with company ; some of them grouped at windows, which were thrown open to admit the sweetness of a summer afternoon, others differently disposed ; conspicuous in ease and animation

appeared Lady Mandeville, in beauty and blandishments her daughters. Near the former was seated Lady Malverton, and till dinner was announced conversation did not languish between them. Lady Mandeville was amusing the Countess, by anticipating the surprise which, she took it for granted, the latter would feel at the unfashionable appearance of their dinner table: “so unlike,” her Ladyship added, “the elegance which characterizes your own. But the fact is, Lady Malverton, that Sir William’s antiquated notions of comfort and hospitality, which consists he thinks in crowding the sides of his table with guests, and the surface with dishes, are not to be combated; and while he allows me licence on points more connected with my own and the girls’ pleasures, I do not wish entirely to oppose his predilections, however at variance with my taste.”

Lady Malverton, herself a wife, could of

course fully enter into the necessity of conceding trivial points to ensure important ones; and entering the dining-room, to which she was conducted by Sir William, gave her an opportunity of judging of the extent of the sacrifices Lady Mandeville had made.

The table, groaning under piles of edibles, might be surfeiting to a modern eye; but the glittering dishes which bore them redeemed their appearance:—and the size of the party which surrounded the table, might have caused doubts of all being enabled to meet attention, had not the number of servants in waiting destroyed the idea. So that, if things were on a more extensive plan than was quite consistent with fashionable limitation, there was every thing correspondent, and abundance of eating was not to stand proxy, as is sometimes the case, for necessary utensils; or enjoyment of society, for deficiency of comfort. Soup

figured at top and bottom ; that at the former helped by Sir William, that at the latter by his eldest son.

“ I recommend this brown soup,” said Sidney ; “ you had better let me send you a little, Lady Vignoles. The white is cold ; I have just been helped to some of it, and sent it away.”

“ Oh ! I prefer any thing cool this warm weather,” returned Lady Vignoles.

“ Any thing cool but soup and coffee,” observed the Count de Meurville.

“ What sort of soup do they turn out in France ?” enquired Mr. Blandford, a gentleman seated near the lower end of the table, “ for I am going there next week, and want to know whether I shall prepare portable.”

“ Oh, the French would be very much offended by your taking that precaution,” said every one, “ for they reckon their soups the best in the world.”

“ Very probably, but it is not what they reckon them, but what every one else does, I want to know.”

“ Why it entirely depends on taste,” observed Lady Mandeville. “ Some account them delightful, others the contrary; with regard to ourselves, we had an English establishment when abroad, and every thing dressed and done *à L'Anglaise*.”

“ As you value the appearance of your physiognomy,” said Clermont, “ never come in contact with *soup maigre*. It is the most distorting thing you can imagine.”

“ Oh, shocking!” observed Miss Mandeville.

“ Well, now,” said Mr. Mason, a gentleman sitting opposite, “ I think a foreigner to taste our fat mutton broth would pronounce it ridiculous in us to depreciate any thing.”

“ You must not speak disrespectfully of mutton broth,” cried an old gentleman busily

engaged with his dinner ; “ it is one of the best things in the world.”

“ All depends on the making,” remarked Lady Vignoles.

“ Oh, all !” said Mrs. Boswell, “ for I, delicate and fastidious as I am, have been induced to take some, by its being made very nice. Not your fat mutton broth, Mr. Mason,” added she, looking down the table, and requesting the old gentleman to help her to some curry.

“ Mrs. Boswell,” cried Lady Mandeville, “ I don’t like to see you begin with corner-dishes. Take, I beg, a little fish : there is turbot opposite Sir William ; and salmon, my son is helping.”

“ Oh no ! thank you, Lady Mandeville,” returned she, “ I know your corner dishes to be as good as the others, and am not afraid to venture on them. At some places they don’t care what they are composed of.”

"No; they are often but untempting affairs," said Mrs. Vigers.

"To be sure," continued she, "such messes as are sometimes made up! I was dining the other day at a table, where one might have expected better things; and a gentleman who was with me determined on tasting all the black and white compositions, which we observed made it out; and they were all so strong and bad, he assured me he was ready to hang his curiosity."

"I think I shall not have reason to repent of my choice," said Mr. Vigers, "if I solicit to be helped to some of that hashed calf's-head, Sir William is beginning to dispense."

"And I," said Mrs. Boswell, "must trouble Mr. Torrens for a little more rice; I am half an Indian," she playfully added, "I am so fond of rice."

"I, too," observed the Countess, "should endeavour to become so; for I may soon pro-

bably be in the way of meeting it more than any thing else."

"No fear of your going to the East Indies, is there?" said the Count de Meurville.

"Oh, every fear," returned her Ladyship.

"I should say *hope*, were I you," said Mrs. Damer, smiling.

"Good gracious! Caroline," exclaimed Charlotte Mandeville, "what pleasure do you think Lady Malverton could enjoy there?"

"Why she will be as a vice-queen," said Mrs. Damer, smiling, "and live in luxury and distinction that will atone for the unpleasantness of the climate."

"The wealth of the Indies would not do that," observed Miss Mandeville, contumuously.

"You have been in India, have you not, Mr. Mason?" enquired Lady Mandeville.

"Oh, yes," returned he, "I have experienced all the pageantry of the East, and

fancy, if Mrs. Damer had, she would think it dearly purchased by being necessitated to live in such a country."

"I should think, for my part," said Miss Mandeville, "all its luxuries dearly purchased by the necessity of enjoying them at a distance from my country and connexions, were the climate agreeable, instead of the contrary."

"But, Miss Mandeville," cried the Earl of Coralcourt, an old nobleman, who favoured one of the party, and for whose edification this amiable speech was partly made, "your going abroad might be occasioned by forming a connexion dearer than any you left behind."

Miss Mandeville smiled, and declared she did not think she should be ever induced to form a connexion entailing so great a sacrifice.

Her mother laughed, as she said, at the comfort they were all giving the Countess of Malverton. But the latter declared it impossible for any one to give her less pleasing

ideas on the subject of India than she entertained herself.

As the dessert was placing on the table, a servant whispered to Agnes that the Misses Vignoles were in the drawing-room, and she gave a look at De Meurville, as much as to inquire whether she should go to them.

“ You had better take a little fruit first,” said he, putting some mulberries on her plate.

“ I think I should join them,” observed she; and as she spoke, Lady Mandeville called out, “ Agnes, my love, the Misses Vignoles are come; go and bring them in here; they may like to take something after their drive.”

Lady Vignoles interrupted the mandate with a request that Miss Mandeville might not stir till they all moved, for that her girls would find entertainment for themselves in the drawing-room. But Agnes had already gone—she found the Misses Vignoles very demurely seated when she entered, and after a few expressions

of fear at having come too early, and assurances to the contrary, and entreaties to come to the dining-room, and resistance on the plea of its being too awful an encounter, they all fell into total silence; for the Misses Vignoles, shy in the extreme, had seldom the sound of their voices elicited but by necessity, and Agnes was at a loss what topic to start, till the Mount Morning excursion occurred to her, when she asked them how they had enjoyed themselves that day?

“Oh, excessively,” was the general reply.

“But now I think of it,” said Agnes, “one of you was not of the party; how did that happen?”

“No, Dora had a cold,” replied Miss Vignoles, looking at her youngest sister.

“Poor Dora!” exclaimed Agnes; “I hope nothing will interfere to prevent her joining some other party.”

And again a silence ensued, broken by Miss

Vignoles remarking on the excellence of Colonel Blomberg's library.

“ I suspect you fond of reading,” said Agnes, “ by the library having made an impression on you. Am I right ?”

“ Yes, I delight in it,” returned Miss Vignoles.

“ And to which style of reading do you give the preference ?”

“ To history and travels, I think,” said Miss Vignoles, her countenance lightening up.

“ And does Miss Harriet prefer the same ?” inquired Agnes, fancying she traced something a little more arch in her countenance than her sister's.

“ No, she likes biography and poetry,” said Miss Vignoles, answering for her sister.

Agnes smiled. “ And do any of you draw ?” was her next interrogation.

“ No,” they none of them drew. But they played, “ played on the piano, at least,” Miss

Vignoles said, glancing at a splendid harp in the room, on which she presently enquired whether Agnes performed, and, being answered in the affirmative, urged her to favour them with something.

“ I’ll play with the greatest pleasure,” said Agnes, “ but it won’t be a novelty to you, for you must have the opportunity of hearing Lady Georgiana very often.”

“ You are mistaken,” observed Miss Vignoles; “ I don’t think I have heard my cousin play more than twice, since I came to Abbeville. Her harp would be perpetually out of tune, if it were not for my aunt, who touches it frequently and delightfully.”

“ Your cousin’s too pretty to be made to do any thing she does not like,” said Agnes, smiling.

“ So my aunt seems to think,” observed Miss Harriet, “ for she lets her have her own way in every thing, and mamma’s always scolding her about it.”

“ Mamma does not spoil any of you, I suppose,” remarked Agnes.

“ No, she does better,” said Miss Vignoles sensibly. And the harp began to vibrate to the voice of Agnes, as she sweetly warbled

“ Slowly wears the day, love.”

At the conclusion of which they were joined by the ladies from the dining-room, who entered apparently amused by some recent incident.

“ Such a thoughtless thing,” said Mrs. Boswell, “ for me to speak of a man being an old fool who married at sixty, when there was Lord Coralcourt, who’s that if he is a day, just opposite to me, and talked of for some young girl, as every one knows: I declare I thought I should have sunk under the table.”

“ And I,” said Miss Mandeville, “ blushed red, as the carnations in my hair; for Lord Coralcourt seeing you and me laugh, thought it, I am sure, a concerted thing, and stared at us both unmercifully.”

“ Oh, your blushes are so beautiful !” returned Mrs. Boswell, “ that they might well attract a man’s attention ; but looking at *me* was only to mark well the woman who had insinuated him a fool. But how are the Misses Vignoles ?” added she, approaching them, and shaking hands with each alternately ; “ why, they are grown such big girls, Lady Vignoles, you should pass them off as your sisters.”

Lady Vignoles laughed.

“ You may laugh,” said Mrs. Boswell, taking an image from the chimney-piece to examine it ; “ but I assure you, the gentleman who was sitting on my left side at dinner, paid you so many compliments on your appearance, that I, seeing Sir Gerald was at a good distance, and not likely to claim you by any unlucky title, passed you off for a rich young widow without any family, and one whom it would be advisable for him, as a younger son, to pay his addresses to, at the first convenient opportunity.

“ You were very obliging,” said Lady Vignoles; “ but I fear this evening will break the delusion.”

“ Ah, that’s the thing,” cried Mrs. Boswell; you’ll appear a matronly kind of personage surrounded with these young ladies, and Mr. Deptford will call me to account for imposing on him; but I know you of old, Lady Vignoles: a terrible one for carrying on a deception; what we call a tell-truth.”

“ Well, you must forgive it, for ‘ Auld lang syne,’ then,” said her Ladyship, and she laughed.

Miss Mandeville now proposed to Lady Georgiana to take a stroll out, and this giving the idea to the rest, they most of them procured shawls and bonnets to follow their example.

“ Where shall we go?” said Lady Georgiana, as she took the arm of Miss Mandeville.

“ To the garden, perhaps,” returned her companion; “ to what we call the *ladies’* garden,

where no gentlemen are permitted to enter; and where you may ramble from morning till night, pulling fruit, flowers, and doing all sorts of mischief, without being haunted by a cross gardener, or stared at by stupid labourers suspending their work."

"Oh, it must be a phoenix of a garden," said Lady Georgiana, "for every one I was ever in yet, has the attendant nuisances you mention."

"Well, it is then," returned Miss Mandeville; "as seeing the key in the door is a proof. When you wish to get into the generality of gardens, you almost always find that the key has been missing that day: or if not, that the gardener took it off in his pocket, (about *half-an-hour* before;) or at least if it is in the *lock*, the latter is too hard to be turned."

"You draw a lively and correct picture," said Lady Georgiana, pulling a flower. "But," added she quickly, "you must show me, Miss Mandeville, that charming little cottage you

were telling me about, the day we were at Mount Morning."

"Oh, by all manner of means," returned her companion with vivacity. "Well, walk to the upper-end of the garden, and then through a door at the back of the summer-house, into the shrubbery which leads to it."

They did as Miss Mandeville said, and found themselves in a dark shrubbery, down which they proceeded, till they came opposite a little rustic gate, placed at one side, which, on opening it and following the path presented to view, led by a devious winding to a beautiful cottage overgrown with honeysuckles and roses.

"How pretty!" exclaimed Lady Georgiana. "What a delightful fragrance from the flowers! Why, it is just like a French cottage. Dear! I know a young lady who would be delighted with it—who would be wild to live in it."

"I know a young lady," said Miss Mandeville archly, "who has been delighted with

it; who is wild to live in it." And Miss McDougal was pronounced by the lips of each at the same moment.

"Such raptures as she was in," continued Miss Mandeville, "with the whole concern. We had her here for two or three days, about the time this cottage was fitting up; and she was in it from morning till night, assisting with her taste and ingenuity."

"She is a nice girl," observed Lady Georgiana.

"Oh, yes!" returned Miss Mandeville; "the kind of girl one likes to have on a visit. One who understands a little of every thing, and enters into any thing that's going on. Pretty enough to do you credit; yet not so pretty as to attract all the men, which it is not pleasant for a girl, who is your inferior in rank and pretensions, to have the power of doing."

"She is going to be married," observed Lady Georgiana, "to a Mr. Cawdor; and wants me to compassionate her for it."

“ Well, and don’t you ?” inquired Miss Mandeville, with an appealing glance. “ Don’t you think it a thousand pities, that a girl like Miss McDougal, with a pleasing person, excellent disposition, and a good fortune, should be thrown away upon a boor incapable of appreciating her. For my own part, I never think of poor Juliet’s case, without applying to it, though not quite *apropos*, Crabbe’s lines of

“ Art thou, sweet maid, a ploughman’s wants to share,
‘To dread his insult, to partake his care ?’ ”

“ Is he really so bad ?” said Lady Georgiana. “ Well, I never saw him to be enabled to judge myself; and did not think it fair to take a prejudice against him, merely on Juliet’s report; who has ideal standards of perfection running in her head, that prevent her judging fairly of realities.”

Miss Mandeville smiled intelligently.— “ Come,” said she, “ I must introduce you to the extent of this edifice. Shall I first show

you the upper department?" Lady Georgiana agreed, and followed her friend up a few stairs. "This," said the latter, opening a door on the right-hand, "is furnished, as you may perceive, in somewhat a curious manner; with as many geraniums and myrtles as we can persuade Moses, our obstinate old gardener, the green-house can do without; and a few books, the refuse of our overgrown library."

"And a parrot," cried Lady Georgiana quickly, being startled by hearing a voice unlike her own or her companion's.

"Yes, Madame's nasty parrot," returned Miss Mandeville, putting her fingers through the bars of the cage, and calling him by his name.

"He takes your fingers for white sugar," said Lady Georgiana, laughing at the bird as he made a snap at them.

"No, Poll knows them too well to take them for any thing so sweet," returned her companion carelessly, as she crossed the room to let

down a window which had been left open, and through which the fragrance of a lilac tree that grew close outside came delightfully softened. "But come," added she, "we will proceed in our survey. This room," opening the door of one opposite to that they had been in, "contains our stores, from which we can supply ourselves with such food as fruit, vegetables, &c. whenever we are disposed. And in the apartment under it, which, if you'll be good enough to come down again, I'll show you, is collected every necessary utensil for eating and drinking."

Lady Georgiana smiled, wondered, and was all admiration at the arrangement of every thing.

"And now," said Miss Mandeville, opening another door, "I must introduce you to our most important room—the one in which we read, draw, talk, and do every thing that is delightful."

It was indeed the *bijou* of the whole ; here was collected every thing that fancy could form, or taste execute.

“ I see you admit gentlemen here ? ” observed Lady Georgiana, taking a flute from the table, where books, works, and drawing, lay in elegant confusion.

“ Yes, agreeable ones,” returned her companion ; “ we’d admit, for instance, Mr. Granville and Mr. Douglas ; both of whom, you must know, I’m half in love with ; I think they are delightful men, so much life about them. They are great favourites of mine, I assure you, and so you may tell them when you see them.”

“ They will be the happiest men in England,” said Lady Georgiana, seating herself, and looking around the room ; “ but who plays on this flute ? ” added she, still retaining it.

“ Why, my brother Clermont persuades us he does,” returned Miss Mandeville, “ and

affords us high amusement by the wretched harmony he produces. The Count de Meurville plays on the guitar, and very well. But he does every thing well, I think," she added, removing a sheet of paper which concealed a beautifully coloured drawing: " here is a proof he paints well, at least," presenting a picture to Lady Georgiana of a woodman on a frosty morning. " Is it not natural ?"

" Oh, natural !—to the life !" exclaimed Lady Georgiana: " was it from a copy he did it ? or how could he conceive that chilly figure, surrounded with snow, and boughs whitened by frost, in this warm weather."

" I believe it is an original," returned Miss Mandeville; " but you must not conceive the coldness of *his subject* an emblem of that of his *imagination*."

" Rather the contrary," observed Lady Georgiana; " being able to pourtray objects with nothing around to assist him in the delineation,

would impress me with an idea of its vividness."

"He is a delightful man," said Miss Mandeville, sitting down as she spoke; "and I may say so without creating suspicion, for he is almost as much as a married man, namely, a betrothed one; and I feel towards him as towards my brothers; only, *entre nous*, more affectionately, for he makes himself more agreeable than any of them. Indeed, I often say to their faces I would take him as a representative of the three, were it in my power, at least of Sidney and Clermont. I don't know what poor Adrian may be now, for I have not seen him these three or four years: but he used to be a sad inattentive fellow."

"You will miss the Count de Meurville whenever he leaves you," observed Lady Georgiana.

"Oh, indeed we shall!" returned her companion; "but I am in hopes it will not be for

some time yet ; he thinks it probable, circumstances may enable him to remain for about a year in England, or at least till next spring ; and if so, he will reside here till we go to London ; and there, though he may not actually live with us, we shall see him constantly."

" It will make it very agreeable to you," said Lady Georgiana.

" What I admire in De Meurville," continued Miss Mandeville—" and what, from only having heard him spoken of before I saw him, as the favourite of an Emperor, the beloved of an highly endowed and independent woman, and as an all-accomplished man, I had little expected to find—is his total disregard of self, rendered more remarkable by his attention to others ; to women, in particular. I have seen men more flattering in their manner ; but I never saw a man who, without adopting that heartless, universal attention, which only intimates an incapability of limitation, or extent, is so generally polite as De Meurville."

“ He is one of the kind of men I should admire then, I think,” said Lady Georgiana, “ if I came to know him well : I like a man who has shades in his attentions ; who gives an idea that he could be very different in his manners, with the woman he loves, for instance, to what he would be with any woman in the world besides.”

“ Well, if any one gives you an idea that he could be so,” returned Miss Mandeville, “ the Count de Meurville is *that* man ; and whatever I might *once* have done, I no longer wonder at the extravagant affection which every report has insinuated Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe to feel for him ; thinking him, as I now do, a young man who would justify any girl’s attachment. But suppose,” added she, rising quickly, “ we go back to the house ; they will conceive us lost.”

Lady Georgiana agreed, and they set out on their return.

“ I had intended to ask you,” said her

Ladyship, as she took the arm of her friend, “only we had so many things to say to each other, I forgot it, how you like your new relation?”

“Mrs. Damer you mean, I presume,” said Miss Mandeville; “oh, very well; she’s a good creature, but I should like her better if she liked us better, and was a little more amenable to advice.”

“She is not very partial to the latter then, I infer,” returned Lady Georgiana. “How have you discovered it?”

“By her taking ill the most trifling remark or hint that can be made relative to her dress and manner, &c.”

“One would not suspect it,” said Lady Georgiana.

“No,” returned Miss Mandeville, “and I don’t still mean to say that she is ill-tempered, or any thing of that kind; but she has a foolish pride, or something or other about her which

is mortified by the slightest observation ; indeed, I lament it for her own sake," added Miss Mandeville, " for it will prevent her making friends, such friends at least as might be useful to her, by taking the liberty of reproofing and advising her."

" She gives me the idea," observed Lady Georgiana, " of one to whom dress and company is rather a novelty."

" Just so," said Miss Mandeville, delighted to meet with one who entered into the thing : " till Caroline married my cousin, she never either mixed in such good company, or possessed such good clothes as she has since ; and is therefore as much at a loss how to behave in the *one*, as to put on the *other*, which no one can wonder or be displeased at ; we only regret that she will not allow herself to be improved."

When the young ladies returned to the house, they went up to Miss Mandeville's room, to adjust their appearance ; and the first thing

that struck their eye on entering it, was the bed strewed with coloured dresses, sashes, and flowers.

“Ah, I see,” said Miss Mandeville, “my mother has been exhibiting my foreign finery; I wish she had ordered it to be put up when she had done with it; I must ring for Barnet to do so:” and as she spoke she pulled the bell.

“They seem very beautiful things,” remarked Lady Georgiana; holding up a dress, to which was attached a streaming sash.

“Yes, we are tolerably off in the dress way now, as my father knows to his cost,” said Miss Mandeville, laughing; “but don’t mind looking at these now,” added she, taking the gown from Georgiana, and handing it to a young woman who then entered, to fold up; “for we intend,” continued she, as they left her apartment for the drawing-room, “to request your and your mother’s company for several days

here soon, and then, if you are good enough to come, you will have an opportunity of seeing all our curiosities." Lady Georgiana smiled, and they entered the drawing-room, into which the footman had just taken a letter, or what had the appearance of one.

"What the plague can this be!" cried Sidney, opening it; "who left it?"

"A man on horseback, Sir," replied the servant.

And in the curiosity which the late arrival of the epistle occasioned, and the noise and talk of the room, the entrance of Lady Georgiana and her companion was unheeded.

"Why, nothing more or less than a ball," cried Sidney; "a ball at C——, for which they seem to expect we are to take half a hundred tickets: I am sure they have sent us nearly as many."

"When is it to be?" cried every one.

"This day week, I believe," returned Sid-

ney, looking at one card and throwing another to Lady Malverton.

“I hope I am not put down as a patroness,” said the Countess as she took it; “for when they wrote to me about the thing some time ago, I told them I would rather not.”

“Indeed, you are in for it, Lady Malverton,” said Sidney; “and you, Ma’am,” looking at his mother, “are another; and Lady Ramsay, and the Honourable Mrs. Pierrepont; and the more than Honourable,—the lovely, beautiful, and bewitching,”—inserted Sidney, previous to pronouncing the name of “Mrs. Deloraine.”

“They have enough, at any rate,” observed Mrs. Torrens and Mrs. Boswell at the same moment, each a little annoyed at not being included.

“And you are to be a steward, Sidney,” said the Count de Meurville, looking over the card in Mr. Mandeville’s hand.

“Confound it! so I am,” cried Sidney;

“ and here they have got Clavers down, he ’ll be mad enough ; and Damer, upon my word. Ah ! Caroline, you won’t have Charles’s arm all the evening.

“ What ! they have not got me, have they ? ” cried Mr. Damer, who was getting a cup of tea at the other end of the room, where, before a large table, was seated the governess dispensing it.

“ Indeed, they have,” said Sidney.

“ Poor Charles ! ” exclaimed Miss Mandevile, ironically using the epithet, which, in different tones, Mrs. Damer sometimes applied to her husband ; “ how I pity you ! Who are the others, Sidney ? ”

“ Why, the Marquess of Ellendale and Sir Henry Ramsay.”

“ I hope it will be moon-light, or star-light, or something of that kind,” observed Clermont.

“ What an ungallant man you are,” cried the

Count de Meurville, “to think of such a thing!

Shall we not have

‘A nearer, dearer heaven of stars.’”

“If Lord Yalbroke were here,” observed Miss Mandeville, “he’d quote nothing less than Shakspeare: he’d say our eyes——

‘Would through the airy region stream so bright,
That birds would sing, and think it were not night.’”

“Shall I get up and say it, Miss Mandeville?” asked the Count de Meurville; throwing a peculiar expression into his countenance.

“I admire that, De Meurville,” said Sidney, “asking a lady, indeed, if you shall compliment her.”

“Well! I want to get into practice,” returned the Count; “I’m grown quite stupid at it. The ladies I have had to do with of late are above—beyond all compliment.” And as he spoke, his eyes met for a moment those of Lady Georgiana.

“ We should all get up, and make our best curtsies for so fine a speech,” said Lady Mandeville laughing.

“ No, I’ll dispense with such homage,” returned the Count de Meurville, throwing his eyes on the ground, which gave a peculiar softness to his expression. “ Reserve your best curtsies for this day week ; and, by the by,” he added, taking up a card, “ what music is there to be ? Two bands, I declare ! one belonging to the Militia of the County ; the other to the regiment stationed at C——.

“ Do you know any thing of the military near us ? ” enquired the Countess, of Lady Mandeville : “ They are gentlemanly men.”

“ Oh yes,” returned her Ladyship ; “ we have had them frequently to dine here. Indeed, Colonel Capel was to have been here to-day. I don’t know what prevented him. Didn’t you write him a note, Clermont ? ”

“ No, not I, but Percy, Mr. Percy did ; and

there was an answer that he couldn't, or wouldn't, or would if he could come, or something or other. I only glanced at it."

"Is there a Captain Mears in that regiment?" asked Sir Gerald Vignoles. "I became acquainted with him when he was stopping on a visit with some of his friends in Yorkshire, and thought him rather a pleasant man. I have never met him since."

"Oh! he's at G——," said Sidney; "I was out fishing with him the other day; and indeed, now I think of it, he said he had heard you were in the country, and intended to call upon you. But he has been laid up since, with a fall from his horse."

Desultory conversation continued to be carried on in different parts of the room, till it became so dusk, that to a stranger entering, the figures in it would have been undistinguishable; when, by a general impulse, lights were proposed, and rang for. The introduction of

them was shortly followed by the entrance of all the gentlemen from the dining parlour, with the exception of Sir William, who never appeared in his drawing-room after dinner: sometimes from preferring the evening to transact any business he might have with his steward; but more frequently, from having drunk till he was too heavy and stupid to be fit for female society.

The card-tables were now arranged—whist and casino for the elders, and a round game for those of the juniors who preferred it; while music, and the pictures, puzzles, &c. which were scattered on different tables, occupied the remainder. The Count de Meurville and Lady Georgiana, hanging over a table of drawings, were employed till the carriage of the latter was announced, in making selections of those which would be best for her Ladyship's copy. And she invariably preferred those which had been done by his hands.

Previous to departure, they almost all agreed in their intention of attending the ball that day week. But none would resign the idea of seeing each other before that time to talk over the subject, or communicate any circumstance which might interfere to prevent them.

CHAPTER XI.

“ There 's a language that 's mute, there 's a silence that
speaks,
There is something, that cannot be told;
There are words which can only be read on the cheeks,
And thoughts but the eyes can unfold.”

From Agnes Mandeville to Catharine Morton.

Hermitage.

MY DEAREST CATHARINE,

As you tell me that my letters amuse you, I shall continue to write them, though I am at a loss to conceive how they can; and at a still greater, to imagine how you, versed in the annals of luckless lovers, from Sir Charles Grandison and Miss Byron, to Waverley and Miss Bradwardine, can be interested in the proceed-

ings of two such inconsequent beings as De Meurville and myself. Professing yourself, however, as you do, concerned about nothing so much, I can only suppose you tired of romance, and turning to reality for refreshment; and willing to gratify you on any subject, I shall, as you desire, write of nothing but him and myself; though it will, I am afraid, betray an encouragement of Clifford's affection on my part, which, considering him the betrothed husband of another, I ought to discountenance. The fact is, however, Catharine, and 'tis in vain to conceal it, that what I have heard of the caprice and pride of Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe's character, leads me to hope that, in some rash moment, she will marr her at present happy destiny by marrying another than Clifford—for the world may to her contain more De Meurvilles than one—by taking the veil, or some such mad step; and then your happy, happy Agnes, will in all human pro-

bability obtain the hand of the man, of whom she has long possessed the heart. This perhaps is a delusion, which I ought not to allow to influence my conduct ; but it is one too delightful not to be encouraged ; and when with De Meurville, when I have to resist the pleadings of his heart and my own, all my philosophy flies ; and both of us indulging in the same affection for the other, are animated, I suspect, by the same hope. Indeed, he has often told me, when I, somewhat conscience-struck, have been exerting my eloquence in the cause of Annette, " That she doesn't care for him,—that it is his title and fortune alone she values ; and that the first who offered himself to her, capable of eclipsing *him* in that, will eclipse him in her esteem, and make her renounce her engagement." " Of what consequence," I once exclaimed, when he was saying this, ".Fortune can ever be to your wife, I own myself at a loss to

imagine :" and he smiled (and looked at me, as he often does), and told me, " I must one day resign *mine* for him ! Add *that* to the thousand obligations my happy husband would ever have to owe me." " My happy husband !" repeated I, " Oh, Clifford !" " Well and shall I not be happy?" said he, in caressing accents. " Too happy when I possess *you*." " If on me depended your happiness," replied I ; " but—" De Meurville was not in a humour to hear of obstacles, and I remained silent : when we were interrupted by the entrance of visitors, or something or other to remind us that the world was not composed of lovers. As you read this *last* sentence, I hear you exclaim : " One would really think Agnes supposed it was, or she would not imagine I could be interested in this detail about herself and the Count de Meurville !" But remember, Catharine, it was *you* who invited it ; and I would sooner tire you in obeying your own request

than disoblige you by withholding it on my own surmises. Therefore, to return to Clifford, you must know he gave me the other evening a surprise I have scarcely forgiven him for yet, in spite of his imploring tones and pleading looks. It happened that all the family (except myself, who from having sprained my ankle was obliged to stay at home,) were gone out, some to dine, and others only to walk ; when I, at loss what to do, took it into my foolish head to endeavour to sketch a likeness of De Meurville, from a portrait of him that hung over the chimney-piece, little thinking I should be arrested in my labours by the original, (who had gone to Town a day or two before,) but so it was finally to be. My first alarm, indeed, was occasioned by the entrance of the servant with the tea ; in bringing in the *et ceteras* of which he comes in and out so often, that after the first time I did not look round, but pursued very quietly

my picture, which I had placed on the chimney-piece: till, in the midst of a vain attempt to make the expression of those eyes find their way to the paper, which had so often found their way to *my heart*, I was surprised by feeling the arms of some one thrown around me: and, on turning, to behold that person Clifford: it was indeed *his* arms that encircled me. It was before *him*! like a convicted culprit, I stood, wishing a world divided us. “I am afraid I alarmed you,” said he, feeling I believe my heart beating violently, and seeing me covered with blushes.

“A little,” I rather murmured than said, convinced that he must have perceived how I had been employed; and in that humiliating idea almost losing my powers of articulation.

“I am so sorry,” said Clifford, in a half-saucy, half-serious tone, and trying to meet my eyes as he spoke, which, however, were im-

penetrably fixed on the ground. “ And how have you been, Agnes, since I saw you ?” continued he ; “ and how does it occur that I am so happy as to find you alone ?”

“ I am very well,” returned I ; “ but could not go out with the rest, on account of having sprained my ankle the other evening.”

“ How did you manage that ?” said he, stooping down to look at it ; but it bore such little outward mark of injury, that if he could have thought I had anticipated his return that evening, he might have supposed I had made it an excuse to stay at home for him.

“ Have you no compassion on me, Agnes,” whispered he, after a silence the most embarrassing to me.

“ What do you mean ?” I enquired.

“ I mean, am I never to behold those dear eyes again,” returned he.

It was not in woman, at least it was not in your friend to resist the voice and the

manner in which these words were said. I raised my eyes to his, and asked him "to let go my hands," which he was holding in his.

He smiled, and resigned one; but had no sooner done so, than his eyes apparently were caught by the paper on the chimney-piece; on which, besides his own countenance, was inscribed his name in every possible shape and direction, and taking it up he began to examine it, when I, almost in tears, exclaimed, "If you have any regard for me, Clifford, give me that!"

He held it up for a moment, and looked from it to me. "You must make some warmer appeal," said he, "to tempt me to resign what I suspect—"

"If you have any affection for me," said I, in faltering accents, and he instantly resigned it, and I tore it to pieces.

“ I don’t think, Agnes,” observed he, laughing, “ you could have been more terrified, had your father discovered a letter from some forbidden lover.”

“ I should have been less.”

“ Are you more afraid of me than of your father?” demanded he, with no very terrible expression of countenance.

“ Not more afraid,—more ashamed.”

“ But you did not give me time to look at that paper,” said he.

“ Had you not, indeed, time?” returned I, reviving at that idea.

He gave me to understand he had not; but from doing so indirectly, I very much fear it was only out of compassion to my delicacy. During the rest of the time of being alone we walked about the room together, looking at the pictures, which, as it was not a room we usually sat in, he had never examined, and

being all foreign landscapes, they interested him, who has been so much abroad, extremely.

I often wonder, Catharine, whether De Meurville will be delightful as a husband as he is as a lover. I certainly think, from my knowledge of his character, that the influence of the mistress must continue in the wife, or he would not have sufficient control over the warmth of his passions. For even on me, when an emotion of levity or pique has actuated me, he has sometimes cast glances which gave me a lively idea of what would be his language were he, as a husband, privileged to reprove me; more particularly were I unhappy enough to have become a wife whom he ceased to love, though he had the principle to protect. But at the same time I must do him the justice to say, that if he is inclined to be high-spirited and haughty when provoked, he is equally capable of being softened by repentance. And often

has a look, a sigh of mine, recalled him to kiss and embrace the hand, he a moment before had rejected. Adieu ! my dear Catharine, I do not expect your reply to this will commence with a parody on Dr. Johnson's reply to Mr. Boswell, when speaking of Miss Burney's “Cecilia,” ‘Sir, if you *talk* of Cecilia, talk *on*.’

I am, &c. &c.

AGNES MANDEVILLE.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Avaunt ! I shake thee from me Care ;
The gay, the youthful, and the fair,
From Lodge, and Court, and House, and Hall,
Are hurrying to the country ball.”

THE night of the ball, in preparations for which many a lady had been assiduous, at last arrived, fine as could be desired ; and the party from Abbeville entered C—— about ten o'clock, easily distinguishing the house where the company were assembled by the crowd surrounding it, and lights glaring through the windows. The first dance was forming as they entered the ball-room, and the Countess of Malverton was requested to open it with the

Marquess of Ellendale, but her Ladyship declining the honour, it was transferred to Lady Ramsay, who led off with great grace; she was followed by Lady Georgiana and Lord Clavers; the former's beauty excited universal admiration; and to be on all sides envied as the happy mother of Georgiana, was a triumph to which the heart of Lady Malverton could not be insensible.

A little before eleven o'clock the bustle and sensation without announced a new arrival, and dressed with carelessness, intended to convey an idea of no addition having been made to their ordinary dinner-dress, Lady Mandeville, two of her daughters, and Mrs. Damer entered, followed by several gentlemen; partners were speedily furnished to those of the former who wished to dance, and the latter sauntered about for some time with fashionable apathy. After the set was concluded, the usual interregnum took place, in which couples walked about, or

sat down together, engaged in fanning and flirting, while the general buzz throughout the room enabled individual conversations, whether directed to criticism, politics, or love, to pass unheeded. Quadrilles next ensued, in which Lady Georgiana stood up with the Count de Meurville, and her former partner, Lord Clavers, took out Miss Mandeville; somewhat justifying by this early attention, the report which had been spread of his being attached to her; indeed, as they appeared beside each other in the dance, Lady Georgiana could not help thinking, that if similarity of person and manners were a requisite, they, to a certain degree, possessed it, for each were elegant in the former, languishing and fashionable in the latter; and both Lord Clavers and Miss Mandeville, from habits of dissipation, had lost the glow of nature in an apathy far less pleasing; while in Lady Georgiana, to whom these thoughts occurred, as well as in the Count de

Meurville, Nature appeared conspicuous, though it was a nature to the highest degree elevated and refined. While dancing with the latter, Lady Georgiana took an opportunity to inquire after Agnes, who was not at the ball, and as she pronounced her name threw an expression of archness into her voice, which she supposed, had the Count de Meurville been partial to his cousin, as she suspected, would have produced a corresponding meaning in his: unaware that a man may mention less or more indifferently the woman he loves, than any of her sex beside, only because he values her beyond it all.

And in the Count de Meurville's answer she could certainly trace little to enlighten her on the subject of his affections. He merely replied, that "Agnes had a cold, and Lady Mandeville was afraid to allow her to go out."

"She's very delicate, I believe?" said Lady Georgiana.

“Oh, very!” returned the Count. “It was to recover her health and Miss Mandeville’s the family went abroad.”

As he spoke, Charlotte Mandeville came over to them ; and after nodding to Lady Georgiana, whom she had spoken to before, said—
“Clifford, I have taken the liberty of declaring myself your partner for the next set, for I was haunted by a horrible man, whom I refused to dance with, on pretext of being engaged, and who persisted in knowing to whom.”

“I shall be very happy,” returned the Count de Meurville.

“Oh, of course,” said Charlotte. “But why, Lady Georgiana, do you allow him to sit down ; whenever I have a handsome partner I profess myself inclined to walk ; ‘tis only when I have been unlucky enough to get the contrary I hide myself and him, as you and Clifford are doing now.” So saying, she turned away,

leaving Lady Georgiana's cheeks suffused with blushes.

"Miss Charlotte takes the liberty of saying whatever arises in her mind, you may perceive, Lady Georgiana," said the Count De Meurville, noticing the confusion of his partner.

"She only anticipated the proposition I was about to make, of taking a turn around the room," returned Lady Georgiana, rising with dignity.

"You are very good," said he, "not to make the dismissal of your partner atone for the folly of his cousin?"

"Very good!" returned her Ladyship, playfully, "not to punish myself. But what is the name of that lady who has been talking to my mother at such an unmerciful rate this last half hour? I am very curious to know."

"In green, you mean," said the Count de Meurville.

"In the colours of the rainbow, for that matter," replied Lady Georgiana. "I can count at a glance, pink, purple, green, brown, &c., &c."

"That 's Mrs. Raymond, if I don't mistake," said her companion.

"Well, do come and assist me to rid my mother of her," cried Lady Georgiana; "she hates being beset with a great talker. How shall we contrive it? We 'll say, there 's a young lady just fainted from the heat of the room, which will be truth, but we don't know who it is; and then Mrs. Raymond will start up and think it 's one of her daughters, for I am sure there are several of them here."

"And then," said the Count, "your mother will make you sit down, and send me off to see after the young lady, and scold me for not having offered my services before."

"Not at all," returned Lady Georgiana; "the anxious mother will be off with an exclamation of, 'Perhaps it 's Mary,' 'or Bessy,' or anything

else ; and my mother will hope it is not ; and I shall be certain it is ; and you 'll look indifferent, as if you didn't care who it was. And when Mrs. Raymond 's at the other end of the room, I 'll make my mother laugh by telling her my stratagem."

Lady Georgiana accomplished her design : got the talkative lady from her mother's side, and sunk down there herself in a convulsion of laughter, leaving the Count de Meurville to explain its cause. " Now don't render all my trouble useless," said Lady Georgiana, with the petulance of a spoiled child, " by remaining here till your tormentor returns, for I am sure you must have got a headache already, but come with us into the card-room."

" I am ready, indeed," returned Lady Maverton, rising ; " being tired of this situation."

" But I assure you, Mamma," said the

sprightly Lady Georgiana, "I have not done with mischief yet, though you think proper to look grave on this frolic."

"I never look grave on you," returned the Countess, fondly.

"You know the inutility of the measure," said her Ladyship, laughing and glancing archly at the Count de Meurville.

"No, I am only aware of its impossibility."

"What's useless may as well be impossible," saucily remarked Lady Georgiana. "But to return to what I was saying, I intend to do more mischief; I must tell my aunt that Ellen is flirting and talking at a great rate with a nobody knows who, and every one is staring at her; and she'll be in such a fright, and not know one card from another, and be begging any one to take her hand while she goes in pursuit of her daughter; and I shall be amused to the last degree."

"You are an incorrigible creature, Georgy,"

said her mother, as the former walked demurely over to Lady Vignoles ; “ isn’t she, Count Meurville.”

“ Only a delightful one, Lady Malverton ; one who would make any mother proud, and any lover happy.”

“ But how does it happen,” inquired the Countess, seating herself, “ that we don’t see more of the young ladies from Hermitage this evening ? ”

“ Why, I don’t know,” said the Count, leaning back on the sofa on which they were seated ; “ we thought there was enough of us, that we had come in storming order, as it was. Don’t you think so too ? But indeed,” added he quickly, “ we had hoped to have had Mrs. Balfour with us this evening, she has been promising to come down to Hermitage some time past. You know the Balfours, of course.”

“ A little,” returned Lady Malverton ;

“ but they have had a large family since I knew them.”

“ Without exception,” said the Count de Meurville, in an animated tone, “ they have six of the most beautiful children I ever saw.”

“ They might easily be handsome if they resembled their parents,” returned Lady Malverton.

“ Well, they do,” said the Count; “ and you can conceive nothing prettier than the picture Mr. and Mrs. Balfour have had taken of them in a group. Here Adrian, an arch, black-eyed boy is spinning his top; there Agnes, a wild, auburn baby, sitting with her playthings, while Sidney, Cecilia, and I forget how many more, amusing themselves with birds, flowers, &c., fill up the piece.”

“ I can imagine it must be very well worth seeing,” said Lady Malverton; “ and whenever I go to London, I shall call on the Bal-

fours, were it but to look at the original of what you have so happily sketched."

"But in the mean time here comes the most noble the Marquess of Ellendale," observed the Count de Meurville, rising. "Your Lordship is about to claim my ci-devant partner, I presume," continued the latter, addressing his Lordship.

"Just so," said the Marquess: "where shall I be fortunate enough to find Lady Georgiana Granville?"

"She is standing at the card-table over there," returned the Countess; "having left me to flirt with the Count de Meurville."

"I shall not allow her to treat me so unceremoniously, Lady Malverton," observed his Lordship, laughing, as he led off the fair Georgiana: "but having won shall wear the prize."

"Lord Ellendale's engagement reminds me of

my own," said the Count de Meurville; " and here 's Mrs. Boswell very probably sent as deputy to claim me."

" You judge right," cried Mrs. Boswell; " I am commissioned by Miss Charlotte Mandeville to call you to account for neglect, or release you from your promise, if you think it too irksome for fulfilment."

" Too irksome to fulfil a promise made to a lady," said the Count de Meurville; " if she comes to make that supposition, I must indeed be off;" and so saying he left the room, leaving the Countess of Malverton and Mrs. Boswell together.

" Well, are you not completely fatigued?" said the latter; " I am come in here as a retreat from the noise and heat."

" Indeed," returned Lady Malverton, " I have been taking it very quietly, not dancing, walking, or talking much."

" You have been playing spectator," said Mrs. Boswell laughing, " and criticising every one."

" No ; only admiring !" replied the Countess.

" In truth," cried Mrs. Boswell, fixing her eyes in arch womanly penetration, " you must be very lenient if you could admire every thing this evening ; for I think there are some as ridiculous figures in the next room as ever I saw."

" Well, to admiring every one," said the Countess, " I will add, that I could ; leaving you to discover who I could not."

" One whom you could not I'll tell you in a moment," returned Mrs. Boswell, " and that 's Mrs. Harland : did you ever see such a dressed-up ridiculous fool in your life ; dancing away as if the fate of the nation depended on it ?"

" She does look very foolish, certainly," said the Countess ; " I was noticing her and Mrs. Pennington, all bedizened out in pink."

“ Ah ! she again,” cried Mrs. Boswell ; “ with all her neck and bosom displayed, as if she were a fair girl of seventeen, instead of a coarse woman of forty ! I am sure I shall not forget the look of disgust which the Count de Meurville cast upon her when she was figuring down the dance, fancying herself, I suppose, a happy prototype of the *Venus de Medicis*.”

“ Though a more unhappy one could scarcely be conceived !” said Lady Malverton, laughing.

“ And is it not sickening,” continued Mrs. Boswell, “ though she’s a Helen in comparison to the others, to see Miss Mandeville, with her things drooping off her shoulders, languishing and sentimentalizing with Lord Claver, as if they were betrothed lovers, when every one knows in his embarrassed circumstances he’d be more likely to marry a brewer’s daughter, who was rich, than an Earl’s, who, like Miss Mandeville, was not.”

“ That Mrs. Damer,” said Lady Malverton, “ the bride I mean, seems very timid : I could not help noticing her when she was dancing in the quadrilles.”

“ Yes,” returned Mrs. Boswell ; “ she appears, poor thing ! to deem herself unworthy of breathing the same air with others.”

“ The same air with the Mandevilles, at least,” said the Countess ; “ *apropos.* to whom, how does it happen that two of the daughters are never visible ; one is, I should think, quite old enough to be come out.”

“ Oh, it was always the case,” returned Mrs. Boswell ; “ they are no better than upper servants at home. Lady Mandeville, obliged to retrench in some ways, makes this one ; and the girls, who, by the by, are very plain, work I am told a great deal ; and when there’s company, superintend on the background, that no extravagance or waste may be committed.”

“ It is a prudent plan,” returned the Countess, drily.

“ I have heard,” continued Mrs. Boswell, in a lower tone, “ that there is a son or two in business of some kind ; but this I do not know for certain, it may be a mere report. Lady Mandeville never speaks of any but the two at home, and one who is with his regiment in America.”

“ There are families,” said Lady Malverton, —“ and I should suspect that one—in which the least promising are obliged to toil for that existence which the more favoured have but to enjoy and to adorn.”

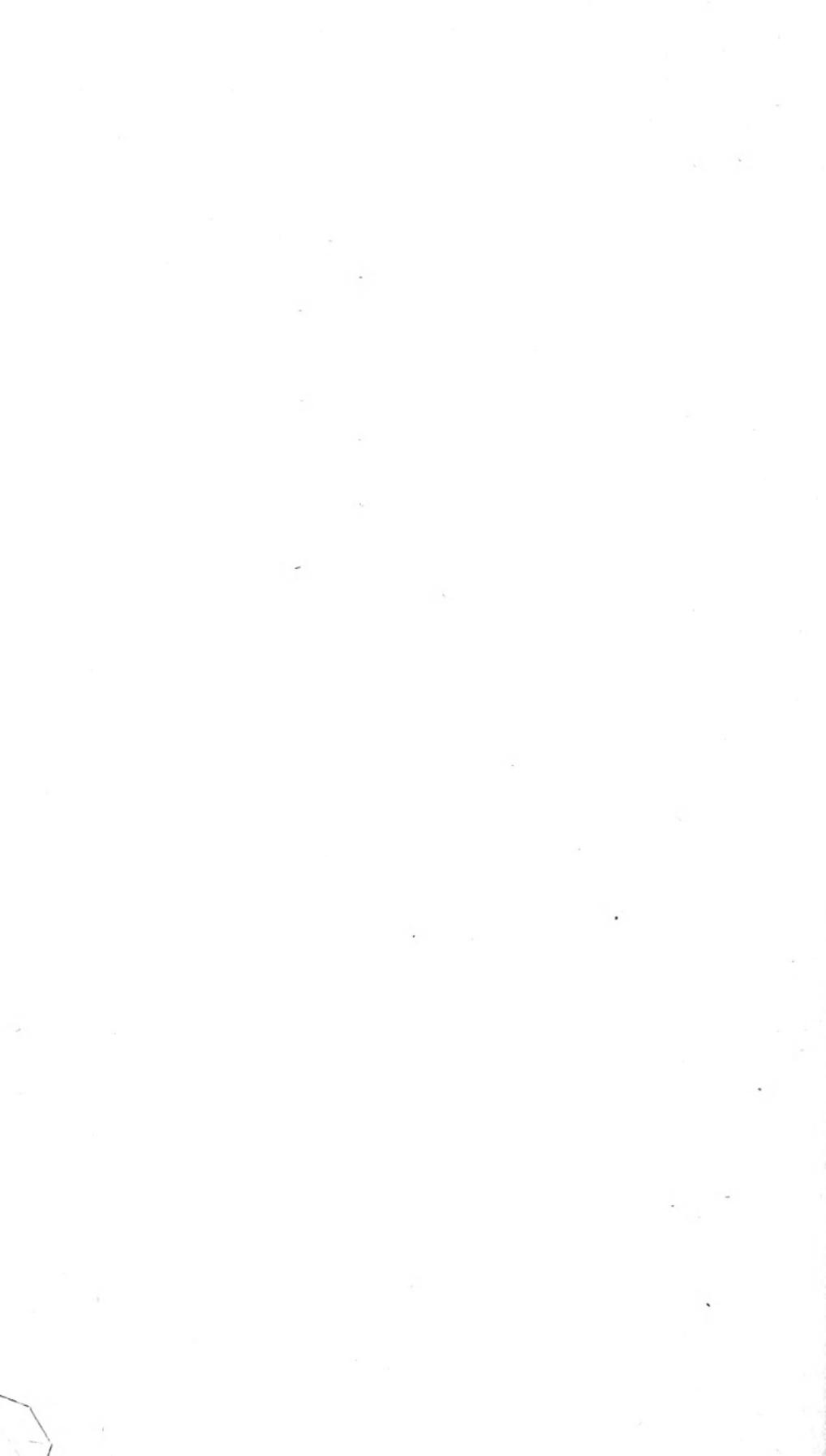
Supper was presently ready, and the company left warm, well-lighted apartments, for a long cold room but dimly illumined ; where, on long tables, surrounded with benches, was spread the repast, which consisted of every delicacy of the season. The gentlemen were assiduous in their attentions ; the ladies, in

general, pleasing and pleased. There was laughing, talking, and singing; and after the conclusion of the whole, some returned to the dancing-room, but the greater number to their homes; among whom were the families of Abbeville and Hermitage.

END OF VOLUME I.

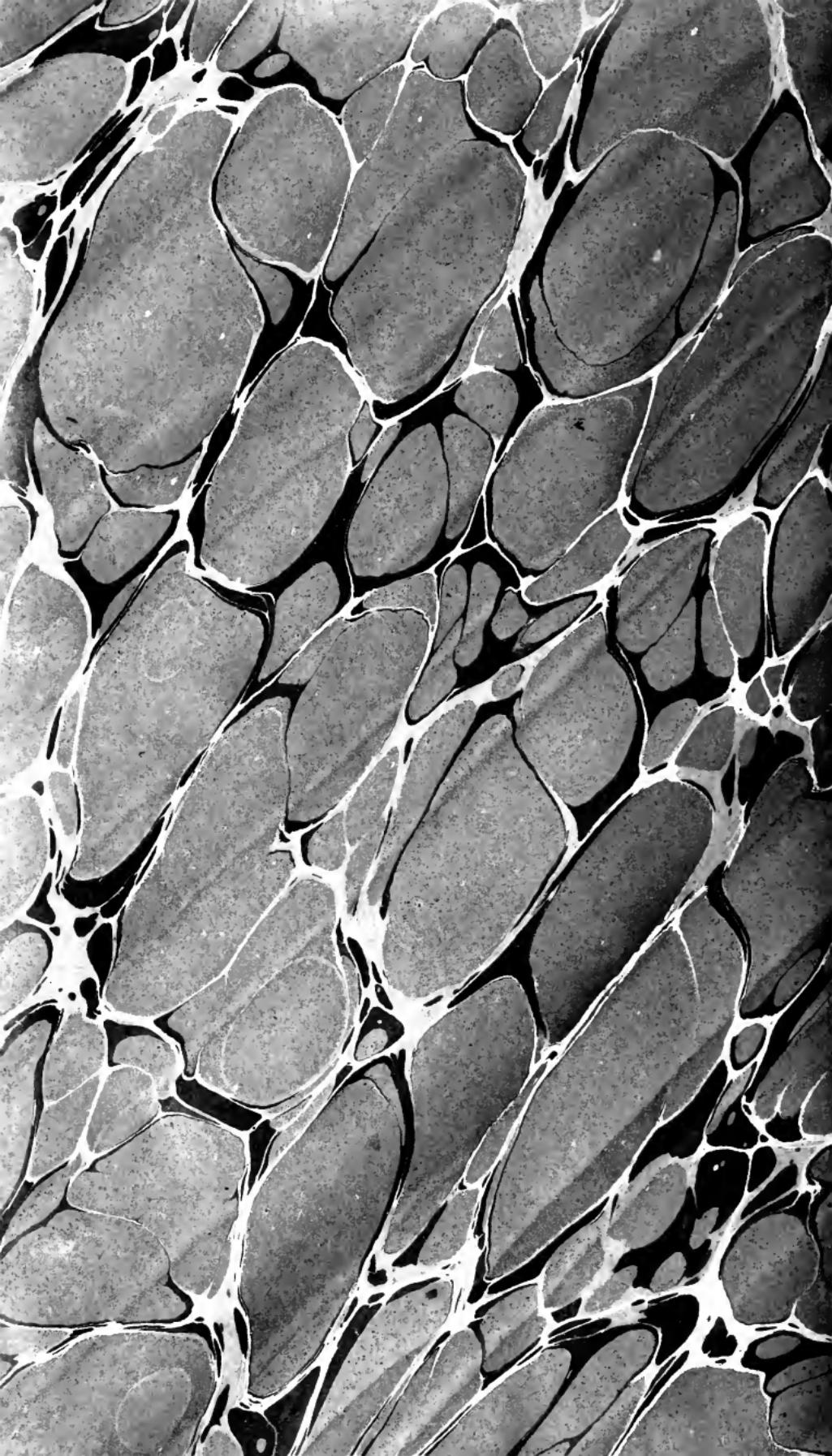
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